# billboard

JUNE 22, 2024 • BILLBOARD.COM

PLUS

**ST. VINCENT**

**DAVID FURNISH**

And 29 Other LGBTQ+ Executives Leading Now Show Their **PRIDE**

# $IGN OF THE TIMES

**HOW TY DOLLA $IGN GETS HITS ACROSS THE FINISH LINE — AND TO THE TOP OF THE CHARTS**

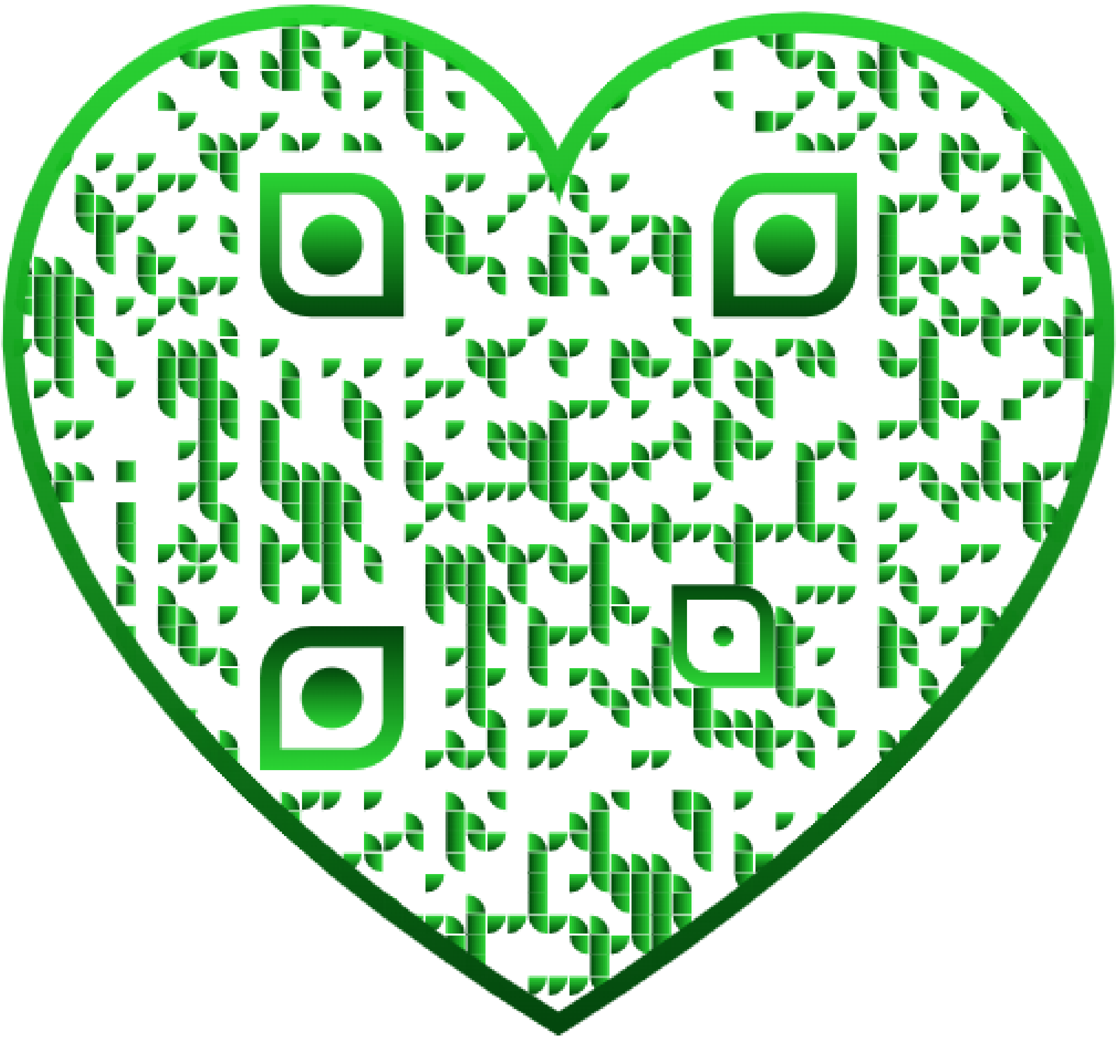


PHOTO: MISAN HARRIMAN

HUSBAND. FATHER. TRAILBLAZER.
VISIONARY. ACTIVIST.

*Congratulations David*

on Being Named Billboard's
Pride Executive of the Year

AEG
PRESENTS

# contents

JUNE 22, 2024
VOLUME 136
NO. 10

## Features

**34**
**$IGN OF THE TIMES**
The Kendrick Lamar track that capped a historic beef and the No. 1 Ye album no one expected have something crucial in common: connections to **Ty Dolla $ign**, the musical polymath who has changed the sound of modern R&B and hip-hop.

**41**
**PRIDE 2024**
**David Furnish** leads *Billboard*'s list of 30 executives across industry sectors who are working to create a more diverse and equitable future for music's LGBTQ+ community.

**50**
**'I'M QUEER. I KNOW HOW TO CODE-SWITCH'**
For Grammy-winning hit-maker Annie Clark — better known as the shape-shifting rocker **St. Vincent** — identity and performance have always been linked. Two decades into her career, her influence is felt more than ever.

**MASTHEAD**
**4**

**BILLBOARD CHARTS**
**7**
**Sabrina Carpenter** boasts the top two spots on the Billboard Global 200 with "Espresso," her first No. 1, and "Please Please Please," new at No. 2.

**THE MARKET**
**21**
The **U.S. Department of Justice**'s antitrust action against **Live Nation** will probably take years to resolve, but its complaint hints at the probable winners and losers.

**26**
Black Music Action Coalition's **Willie "Prophet" Stiggers** talks about the organization's updated approach to its Music Industry Action Report Card.

**THE SOUND**
**29**
**Towa Bird**'s debut album proves she never needed permission to be the artist she has become.

**32**
Trans soul singer **Jackie Shane** disappeared in 1971 — a new film reclaims her legacy.

**THE PLAYERS**
**57**
Pioneering music publisher **TRO Essex** hits 75 years — and launches new label **Shamus Records**.

**FOR THE RECORD**
**60**
When **Prince & The Revolution** stormed the charts with *Purple Rain* 40 years ago, the doves cried, but the fans went crazy. Here's how *Billboard* tracked the takeover.

---

**ON THE COVER**
Ty Dolla $ign photographed by Sage East on May 16 in Los Angeles.

**THIS PAGE**
St. Vincent photographed by Lenne Chai on May 28 at Issue Studio in Los Angeles.

St. Vincent wears gemstone-encrusted Bose Ultra Open Earbuds custom designed by Maggi Simpkins.

**TO OUR READERS**
*Billboard* will publish its next issue on July 20. For 24/7 music coverage, go to billboard.com.

BMI

# CHRISTIAN AWARDS 2024

## SONG OF THE YEAR

**GRATITUDE**

Dante Bowe
Ben Hastings (APRA)
Bethel Worship Publishing
Capitol CMG Publishing
Heritage Worship Music Publishing
Maverick City Publishing
Shout MP Brio

## SONGWRITER OF THE YEAR

**PHIL WICKHAM**

Holy Forever
Hymn of Heaven
Then Christ Came
This Is Our God

## PUBLISHER OF THE YEAR

**ESSENTIAL MUSIC PUBLISHING**

Cornerstone
God Is in This Story
Heart of God
Holy Forever
I Thank God
I'm So Blessed
Perfectly Loved
Same God
Thank God I Do
Then Christ Came
This Is Our God
Who I Am

### CORNERSTONE
BRYAN FOWLER
TOBYMAC
*ACHTOBER SONGS / BE ESSENTIAL SONGS*
*BRYANFOWLERSONGS / RIVER OAKS MUSIC COMPANY*

### FEAR IS NOT MY FUTURE
KIRK FRANKLIN
NICOLE HANNEL
JONATHAN JAY
HANNAH SHACKELFORD
*AUNT GERTRUDE MUSIC PUBLISHING*
*CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / LET THERE BE SONGS*
*MAVERICK CITY PUBLISHING / SOUND VICTORY PUBLISHING*
*SOUNDS LIKE HOME PUBLISHING*

### FIRM FOUNDATION (HE WON'T)
CODY CARNES
AUSTIN DAVIS
CHANDLER MOORE
*A. L. K. D. MUSIC / CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING*
*FOR HUMANS PUBLISHING / MAVERICK CITY PUBLISHING*
*WRITER'S ROOF PUBLISHING*

### FOR GOD IS WITH US
JOSH KERR
LUKE SMALLBONE
*BNA BANGERS / CURB DAYSPRING MUSIC*
*KILNS MUSIC / TUNES OF BLACK RIVER*
*WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP.*

### GOD IS IN THIS STORY
ETHAN HULSE
KATY NICHOLE
JEFF PARDO
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING*
*CENTRICITY SONGS / HULSE HOUSE MUSIC*
*MEAUX MERCY PUBLISHING*

### GOD IS REAL
JACOB MILLS
LEVI MILLS
SUE SMITH
BARRY WEEKS
*CHRISTIAN TAYLOR MUSIC / CLEARBOX BENEFIT*
*MUSIC BY BARRY WEEKS / SUECSMITH SONGS*

### GOD, TURN IT AROUND
JON REDDICK
ANTHONY SKINNER
*B-REDDI MUSIC / HOUSE OF EMACK MUSIC*

### GRATITUDE
DANTE BOWE
BEN HASTINGS (APRA)
*BETHEL WORSHIP PUBLISHING / CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING*
*HERITAGE WORSHIP MUSIC PUBLISHING*
*MAVERICK CITY PUBLISHING / SHOUT MP BRIO*

### HEART OF GOD
ETHAN HULSE
JONATHAN SMITH
ZACH WILLIAMS
*ANTHEMS OF HOPE / BE ESSENTIAL SONGS*
*CASHAGAMBLE JET MUSIC / WISTERIA DRIVE MUSIC*

### HEART OF THE FATHER
MITCH WONG (APRA)
*A WONG MADE WRITE PUBLISHING / INTEGRITY'S PRAISE! MUSIC*

### HOLY FOREVER
JASON INGRAM
CHRIS TOMLIN
PHIL WICKHAM
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / MY MAGNOLIA MUSIC*
*PHIL WICKHAM MUSIC / S.D.G. PUBLISHING*
*SIMPLY GLOBAL SONGS*

### HYMN OF HEAVEN
CHRIS DAVENPORT
PHIL WICKHAM
*CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / CDAVS MUSIC*
*PHIL WICKHAM MUSIC / SIMPLY GLOBAL SONGS / SONGS FOR TIM*

### I THANK GOD
DANTE BOWE
CHUCK BUTLER
JESSE CLINE
MARYANNE J. GEORGE
ENRIQUE HOLMES
AARON MOSES
*AARON MOSES CHIRIBOGA MUSIC / BE ESSENTIAL SONGS*
*BETHEL WORSHIP PUBLISHING / HERITAGE WORSHIP MUSIC PUBLISHING*
*HOLMEBOY MUSIC GROUP / JORD A LIL MUSIC / MAVERICK CITY PUBLISHING / MJ GEORGE MUSIC*

### I'M SO BLESSED
JONATHAN SMITH
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / CASHAGAMBLE JET MUSIC*

### LIAR, LIAR
JASON COX
JOSEPH HABEDANK
JOSHUA ALAN TOMLIN
*CHRISTIAN TAYLOR MUSIC / CLEARBOX BENEFIT*

### LOVE ME LIKE I AM
JOSH KERR
MICHAEL POLLACK
LUKE SMALLBONE
*CURB DAYSPRING MUSIC / KILNS MUSIC / SONGS WITH A PURE TONE / TUNES OF BLACK RIVER*
*WARNER-TAMERLANE PUBLISHING CORP. / WHAT KEY DO YOU WANT IT IN MUSIC*

### ME ON YOUR MIND
JEFF PARDO
ANNE WILSON
*CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / JACOBS STORY MUSIC / MEAUX MERCY PUBLISHING*

### NEVER NOT GOD
JACOB MILLS
LEVI MILLS
BARRY WEEKS
*CHRISTIAN TAYLOR MUSIC / CLEARBOX BENEFIT / MUSIC BY BARRY WEEKS*

### PERFECTLY LOVED
ETHAN HULSE
ANDREW RIPP
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / HULSE HOUSE MUSIC / SONGS BY FISHBONE*

### REST ON US
TONY BROWN
JONATHAN JAY
ELYSSA SMITH
REBEKAH WHITE WILLIAMS
*A NEW SONG FOR A NEW DAY MUSIC / BETHEL WORSHIP PUBLISHING*
*CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / ELYSSA MARIE MUSIC*
*HERITAGE WORSHIP MUSIC PUBLISHING / LET THERE BE SONGS*
*MAVERICK CITY PUBLISHING / MIKE CURB MUSIC / UR CREATIVE*

### SAME GOD
CHRIS BROWN
STEVEN FURTICK
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / MUSIC BY ELEVATION WORSHIP PUBLISHING*

### THANK GOD I DO
JEFF BHASKER
LAUREN DAIGLE
JASON INGRAM
P!NK
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / CAPITOL CMG PUBLISHING / CENTRICITY SONGS*
*EMI-BLACKWOOD MUSIC, INC. / MY MAGNOLIA MUSIC*
*P!NK INSIDE PUBLISHING / PUBALICIOUS / SONY/ATV SONGS LLC / WAY ABOVE MUSIC*

### THEN CHRIST CAME
JASON INGRAM
DAVID LEONARD
PHIL WICKHAM
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / HYATT STREET PUBLISHING WORLDWIDE*
*INTEGRITY'S PRAISE! MUSIC / MY MAGNOLIA MUSIC*
*PHIL WICKHAM MUSIC / SIMPLY GLOBAL SONGS*
*SING MY SONGS / SONGS FOR KARYN PUBLISHING*

### THIS IS OUR GOD
STEVEN FURTICK
PHIL WICKHAM
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / MUSIC BY ELEVATION WORSHIP PUBLISHING*
*PHIL WICKHAM MUSIC / SIMPLY GLOBAL SONGS*

### WHO I AM
BEN FULLER
*BE ESSENTIAL SONGS / BEN FULLER MUSIC*

**CELEBRATE WITH US**

bmi.com/christian2024

MUSIC MOVES
OUR WORLD

# billboard

## Hannah Karp
**EDITORIAL DIRECTOR**

### Editorial
**DAMIEN SCOTT** DEPUTY EDITORIAL DIRECTOR
**LEILA COBO** CHIEF CONTENT OFFICER, LATIN/ESPAÑOL
**FRANK DIGIACOMO** EXECUTIVE EDITOR, ENTERPRISE REPORTING
**REBECCA MILZOFF** EXECUTIVE EDITOR, MAGAZINE
**CHRISTINE WERTHMAN** MANAGING EDITOR
**ALEXIS COOK** CREATIVE DIRECTOR
**JENNY SARGENT** PHOTOGRAPHY DIRECTOR
**JASON LIPSHUTZ** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MUSIC
**MELINDA NEWMAN** EXECUTIVE EDITOR, WEST COAST/NASHVILLE
**GAIL MITCHELL** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, R&B/HIP-HOP
**THOM DUFFY** EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SPECIAL FEATURES/POWER LISTS
**JOE LYNCH** EXECUTIVE DIGITAL DIRECTOR, EAST COAST
**KATIE ATKINSON** EXECUTIVE DIGITAL DIRECTOR, WEST COAST
**ED CHRISTMAN** EXECUTIVE EDITOR, FINANCE

DEPUTY EDITORS **Anna Chan, Lyndsey Havens, Andrew Unterberger**
SENIOR EDITORS **Griselda Flores** (Latin), **Eric Renner Brown**
AWARDS EDITOR **Paul Grein**
SENIOR DIRECTOR **Dave Brooks** (Touring/Live Entertainment)
DEPUTY DIRECTOR, R&B/HIP-HOP **Carl Lamarre** LEAD ANALYST **Glenn Peoples**
SENIOR WRITERS **Kristin Robinson** (Publishing), **Dan Rys, Heran Mamo** (R&B/Hip-Hop/Afrobeats)
DIGITAL NEWS EDITOR **Marc Schneider**
SENIOR CORRESPONDENTS **Katie Bain** (Dance), **Bill Donahue** (Legal), **Elizabeth Dilts Marshall** (Finance)
SENIOR MUSIC REPORTER **Elias Leight**
EDITOR, SPECIAL FEATURES/POWER LISTS **Taylor Mims** EDITOR, HIP-HOP **Angel Diaz**
PRIDE EDITOR **Stephen Daw**
EDITORS AT LARGE **Steve Knopper, Robert Levine**
COPY CHIEF **Chris Woods**
SENIOR COPY EDITOR **Christa Titus**
STAFF WRITERS **Hannah Dailey, Kyle Denis, Jessica Nicholson** (Nashville)
STAFF WRITERS, E-COMMERCE **Lilian Gonzalez, Rylee Johnston, Latifah Muhammad**
ASSOCIATE EDITORS **Rania Aniftos, Chris Eggertsen, Josh Glicksman**
ASSISTANT EDITOR **Jessica Roiz**
WEEKEND EDITORS **Ashley Iasimone, Mitchell Peters**

### Billboard Español
DEPUTY EDITOR **Sigal Ratner-Arias** ASSOCIATE EDITOR **Isabela Raygoza**
SEO SPECIALIST **Luisa Calle**

### Design
ART DIRECTOR **Christopher Elsemore**
SENIOR DESIGNER **Lyanne Natividad**
ART PRODUCTION MANAGER **Dan Skelton**
PRINT PRODUCTION SPECIALIST **Betty Dong**

### Photo
DEPUTY PHOTO DIRECTOR **Samantha Xu**
SENIOR PHOTO EDITOR **Jenny Regan** (Digital)
PHOTO RESEARCHER **Michael Calcagno**
ASSISTANT PHOTO EDITOR **Naomy Pedroza**

### Video
SENIOR CREATIVE PRODUCER **Alyssa Caverley**
POST SUPERVISOR **Jonathan Suhadolnik**
DIRECTOR OF STRATEGY AND PRODUCTION **Ciara Zimring**
HOST/PRODUCER **Tetris Kelly**
PRODUCER/EDITOR **Evan Burke** PRODUCER/EDITOR **Chris George**
VIDEO EDITOR **Matt Damiano** VIDEO EDITOR/SHOOTER **Frankie Pepper**
SENIOR MANAGER, CONTENT AND STRATEGY **Stefanie Tanaka**
SENIOR MANAGER, CONTENT AND PRODUCTION **Emily Fuentes**

### Digital
DIRECTOR, SOCIAL MEDIA **Becky Kaminsky**
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER **Danielle Pascual**
SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR **Chris Claxton**
SOCIAL MEDIA COORDINATOR **Deborah You**
SOCIAL MEDIA MANAGER/STAFF WRITER, LATIN **Ingrid Fajardo**

## Mike Van
**PRESIDENT**

## Dana Droppo
**CHIEF BRAND OFFICER**

### Business Leadership
**SILVIO PIETROLUONGO** EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT, CHARTS AND DATA PARTNERSHIPS
**ANJALI RAJA** SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS OPERATIONS AND AUDIENCE GROWTH
**CHRISTINA MEDINA** SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, TALENT AND PROGRAMMING
**EDWARD STEPANKOVSKY** REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT, CONSUMER BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
**PAM STURCHIO** REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT, BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
**JOE MAIMONE** VICE PRESIDENT, INDUSTRY BRAND PARTNERSHIPS
**SHAMEKA FRANK** VICE PRESIDENT, REVENUE OPERATIONS
**MARY ROONEY** VICE PRESIDENT, EVENTS
**SARA KATZKI** VICE PRESIDENT, BRAND STUDIO
**SHIRA BROWN** VICE PRESIDENT, VIDEO

### Sales & Brand Partnerships
**CONSUMER**
EXECUTIVE DIRECTORS **Brian Nguyen, Sabrina Phillips, Justine Silagi**
DIRECTOR **Corey Armend**

**INDUSTRY**
DIRECTORS **Cynthia Mellow, Ryan O'Donnell, Marcia Olival, Lee Ann Photoglo**

### Charts
MANAGING DIRECTORS, CHARTS AND DATA OPERATIONS
**Keith Caulfield** (Billboard 200, Heatseekers Albums; Los Angeles),
**Gary Trust** (Billboard Hot 100, Pop, Adult)
SENIOR DIRECTOR, CHARTS AND DATA PRODUCTION **Michael Cusson**
DIRECTOR, CHARTS AND DATA PRODUCTION
**Alex Vitoulis** (Blues, Classical, Jazz, World)
SENIOR CHARTS AND DATA ANALYSTS
**Trevor Anderson** (R&B/Hip-Hop; Editorial Research Coordinator),
**Jim Asker** (Country, Christian, Gospel),
**Pamela Bustios** (Latin, Billboard Español),
**Eric Frankenberg** (Touring, Global Music),
**Kevin Rutherford** (Streaming Services, Rock)
SENIOR CHARTS AND SOCIAL MANAGER
**Xander Zellner** (Artists, Songwriters, Producers)

### Events
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR **Morgan Smith**
ARTIST RELATIONS COORDINATOR **Catrise Johnson**

### Account Management
SENIOR MANAGERS **Galina Druzhinina, Andrea Guevara-Gresch, Shannon McMahon** MANAGER **Kristen Wisneski**
SENIOR REVENUE OPERATIONS MANAGER **Mirna Gomez**

### Brand Studio
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, PROJECT MANAGEMENT **Sarah Lombard**
SENIOR PROJECT MANAGER **Sidnei Afari**
SENIOR BRANDED WRITERS/PRODUCERS **James Dinh, Walaa Elsiddig**
PROJECT MANAGER **Ivanna Subervi Hernandez**
BRANDED PRODUCER/SOCIAL MANAGER **Meghan Mahar**
BRANDED CONTENT COORDINATOR **Quincy Green**

### Marketing Strategy
DIRECTORS **Jeanne Dienstag, Jasmine Kim**
SENIOR MANAGER **Anisha Nallakrishnan** MANAGER **Chris Arencibia**
PAID SOCIAL MANAGER **Janki Patel**

### Design
DIRECTORS **Stacy Saunders, Adrian Castillo**

PMC

*BILLBOARD* IS OWNED AND PUBLISHED BY PENSKE MEDIA CORPORATION

## Jay Penske
**CHAIRMAN & CEO**

**Gerry Byrne**
VICE CHAIRMAN
**George Grobar**
PRESIDENT
**Sarlina See**
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER
**Craig Perreault**
CHIEF DIGITAL OFFICER
**Todd Greene**
EVP, BUSINESS AFFAIRS AND CHIEF LEGAL OFFICER
**Celine Perrot-Johnson**
EVP, OPERATIONS AND FINANCE
**Paul Rainey**
EVP, OPERATIONS AND FINANCE
**Tom Finn**
EVP, OPERATIONS AND FINANCE
**Jenny Connelly**
EVP, PRODUCT AND ENGINEERING
**Ken DelAlcazar**
EVP, FINANCE
**Debashish Ghosh**
MANAGING DIRECTOR, INTERNATIONAL MARKETS
**Dan Owen**
EVP, GM OF STRATEGIC INDUSTRY GROUP

**Brian Levine**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, REVENUE OPERATIONS
**Brooke Jaffe**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PUBLIC AFFAIRS & STRATEGY
**David Roberson**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SUBSCRIPTIONS
**Doug Bandes**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PARTNERSHIPS PMC LIVE
**Frank McCallick**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, GLOBAL TAX
**Gabriel Koen**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, TECHNOLOGY
**Jessica Kadden**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PROGRAMMATIC SALES
**Judith R. Margolin**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, DEPUTY GENERAL COUNSEL
**Lauren Utecht**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES
**Marissa O'Hare**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
**Nelson Anderson**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, CREATIVE
**Nici Catton**
SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT DELIVERY

**Adrian White**
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
**Andrew Root**
VICE PRESIDENT, DIGITAL MARKETING
**Andy Limpus**
VICE PRESIDENT, EXECUTIVE SEARCH & HEAD OF TALENT ACQUISITION
**Anne Doyle**
VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES
**Ashley Snyder**
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
**Brian Vrabel**
HEAD OF INDUSTRY, CPG AND HEALTH
**Constance Ejuma**
VICE PRESIDENT, SEO
**Courtney Goldstein**
VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES
**Dan Feinberg**
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
**Denise Tooman**
VICE PRESIDENT, MARKETING, STRATEGIC SOLUTIONS GROUP
**Eddie Ko**
VICE PRESIDENT, ADVERTISING OPERATIONS
**Greta Shafrazian**
VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE
**Gurjeet Chima**
VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL MARKETS
**Jamie Miles**
VICE PRESIDENT, E-COMMERCE
**James Kiernan**
HEAD OF INDUSTRY, AGENCY DEVELOPMENT
**Jennifer Garber**
HEAD OF INDUSTRY, TRAVEL
**Jerry Ruiz**
VICE PRESIDENT, ACQUISITIONS AND OPERATIONS
**Joni Antonacci**
VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCTION OPERATIONS
**Karen Reed**
VICE PRESIDENT, FINANCE
**Karl Walter**
VICE PRESIDENT, CONTENT
**Katrina Barlow**
VICE PRESIDENT, BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
**Kay Swift**
VICE PRESIDENT, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY
**Keir McMullen**
VICE PRESIDENT, HUMAN RESOURCES
**Michael Reed**
HEAD OF INDUSTRY, AUTOMOTIVE SECTOR AND DS PENSKE AUTOSPORT TEAM
**Mike Ye**
VICE PRESIDENT, STRATEGIC PLANNING AND ACQUISITIONS
**Richard Han**
VICE PRESIDENT, INTERNATIONAL SALES
**Scott Ginsberg**
HEAD OF INDUSTRY, PERFORMANCE MARKETING
**Sonal Jain**
VICE PRESIDENT, ASSOCIATE GENERAL COUNSEL
**Thomas Ferguson**
VICE PRESIDENT, PRODUCT LICENSING
**Tom McGinnis**
VICE PRESIDENT, CORPORATE CONTROLLER


**SUBSCRIPTIONS** Call 212-832-4053 or email customerservice@billboard.com.

**REPRINTS AND PERMISSIONS** For accolades, awards seal artwork and article reprint licensing, email Wright's Media at PMC@wrightsmedia.com.

**PURCHASES** To order individual magazine issues, visit shop.billboard.com or call 1-800-493-1910.

BILLBOARD MAGAZINE, Vol. 136 Issue 10 (ISSN 0008-2510; USPS 056-100). Billboard magazine is published monthly with one issue in January, February, April, May, July, September and November; two issues in August, October and December; and three issues in March and June; a total of 19 issues, one of which counts as a double issue, by PMC, 475 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10017. Periodicals postage paid at New York, N.Y., and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all UAA to CFS. (See DMM 507.1.5.2.) NON-POSTAL AND MILITARY FACILITIES: Send address corrections to Billboard, P.O. Box 37943, Boone, IA 50037. Under Canadian Publication Mail Agreement No. 414505040, return undeliverable Canadian addresses to MSI, P.O. Box 2800, Mississauga, ON L4T0A8. For subscription information, call 212-832-4053 (U.S.) or 845-367-3072 (international) or email customerservice@billboard.com. For any other information, call 212-493-4100. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in any retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior written permission of the publisher. © Copyright 2024 Billboard Media LLC. All rights reserved. Printed in the USA.

JUST ANNOUNCED...

# EVMC 2025 ATLANTA

## JUNE 4 – 6, 2025 • THE WESTIN PEACHTREE PLAZA

EVMC (Event & Venue Marketing Conference) is a conference that brings together diversified events and venue professionals across North America to cultivate inspiration, collaboration, and innovation for the growing entertainment industry. Coming off a record-setting sold out year in Denver in 2024, EVMC is excited to head to Atlanta for the first time.

## REGISTER NOW: EVENTVENUEMARKETING.COM

Learn innovations in marketing, publicity, group sales, ticketing, public relations, sales and more with curated agenda tracks that will guide you through actionable tips and notes that are sure to level up your skillset.

## CONGRATS TO OUR 2024 EVMC AWARD WINNERS:

LIZ ROCA | GIGI AWARD • KELLY McGRATH | HALL OF FAME • BRIAN KITTS | IMPACT AWARD • DANIEL KLEIN | BREAKTHROUGH PROFESSIONAL
SCOTIABANK ARENA | MARKETING & PUBLICITY CAMPAIGN OF THE YEAR • DESERT DIAMOND ARENA | MOST CREATIVE ARTIST GIFT <$1K
FISERV FORUM | MOST CREATIVE ARTIST WELCOME + MOST CREATIVE ARTIST GIFT >$1K

jhariah
NO GENRE
ALL DRAMA
“TRUST CEREMONY”
OUT NOW
one
rpm

# charts

DATA FOR WEEK OF 6.22.2024

# Carpenter Pours Double Shot, Led By 'Espresso'

## BILLBOARD GLOBAL 200

**1**

**"Espresso"**
Sabrina Carpenter

| LAST WEEK | PEAK POSITION | WEEKS ON CHART |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | 9 |

**SABRINA CARPENTER'S** ascent hits new heights as the pop singer-songwriter-actress boasts the two biggest songs in the world: "Espresso" rises to No. 1 on the Billboard Global 200, becoming her first leader on the chart, and new single "Please Please Please" debuts at No. 2.

"Espresso" percolates to the chart's hottest spot with 109.3 million streams (up 17%) and 12,000 downloads sold (up 27%) worldwide June 7-13, according to Luminate. Concurrently, the Quakertown, Pa.-born artist's "Please Please Please" becomes her second top 10, debuting with 104.6 million streams and 10,000 sold globally.

The latter song arrived June 7, alongside its official video starring Carpenter's rumored boyfriend, Barry Keoghan, whose turn in the 2022 film *The Banshees of Inisherin* earned him an Academy Award nomination for best supporting actor. She performed both tracks the next day during her set at New York's Governors Ball. The singles introduce her album *Short n' Sweet*, due Aug. 23.

On the Billboard Hot 100, "Please Please Please" debuts at No. 2 and "Espresso" lifts to a new No. 3 best, marking Carpenter's first appearances in the top three. She is the first soloist — and just the second act overall, after The Beatles — to simultaneously place two initial top three hits in the region with no other billed artists. The Fab Four achieved the feat with "I Want To Hold Your Hand" and "She Loves You" for seven weeks in 1964.

Carpenter, who broke through in 2014 starring in Disney Channel's *Girl Meets World*, opened on the South American run of Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour in August-November 2023. She rejoined Swift in February and March for dates in Australia and Singapore. —GARY TRUST

BRYCE ANDERSON

# Hot 100

| 2 WKS. AGO | LAST WEEK | THIS WEEK | Title / PRODUCER (SONGWRITER) | Artist / IMPRINT/PROMOTION LABEL | PEAK POS. | WKS. ON CHART |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | #1 for 5 WEEKS<br>**I Had Some Help**<br>L.BELL,CHARLIE HANDSOME,HOSKINS (A.R.POST,M.C.WALLEN,L.B.BELL,CHARLIE HANDSOME,E.K.SMITH, J.J.HOSKINS,C.P.WALTERS,A.G.GORLEY) | **Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen**<br>MERCURY/REPUBLIC/BIG LOUD | 1 | 5 |
| HOT SHOT DEBUT | | 2 | **Please Please Please**<br>J.M.ANTONOFF (S.CARPENTER,A.R.ALLEN,J.M.ANTONOFF) | **Sabrina Carpenter**<br>ISLAND/REPUBLIC | 2 | 1 |
| 5 | 6 | 3 | SAL/STM<br>**Espresso**<br>J.BUNETTA (S.CARPENTER,J.C.BUNETTA,A.R.ALLEN,S.N.JONES) | **Sabrina Carpenter**<br>ISLAND/REPUBLIC | 3 | 9 |
| 4 | 4 | 4 | **A Bar Song (Tipsy)**<br>S.COOK,N.SASTRY (C.O.CHIBUEZE,S.C.COOK,N.SASTRY,J.JONES,J.A.KENT,M.A.WILLIAMS) | **Shaboozey**<br>AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE/MAGNOLIA MUSIC | 3 | 9 |
| 3 | 3 | 5 | AIR<br>**Million Dollar Baby**<br>M.VOSSBERG,J.ROY,MANNYVELLI,SPARKHEEM,KAVI (T.RICHMAN) | **Tommy Richman**<br>ISO SUPREMACY/PULSE RECORDS/CONCORD | 2 | 7 |
| 2 | 5 | 6 | **Not Like Us**<br>MUSTARD,S.MOMBERGER (K.L.DUCKWORTH) | **Kendrick Lamar**<br>PGLANG/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 1 | 6 |
| 8 | 7 | 7 | **Too Sweet**<br>BEKON,PETE G,CHAKRA,A.HOZIER-BYRNE (A.HOZIER-BYRNE,D.TANNENBAUM,P.GONZALES, D.N.KRIEGER,S.A.GHEMAN,S.D.JOHNSON,T.R.MEHLENBACHER) | **Hozier**<br>RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA | 1 | 12 |
| - | 2 | 8 | **Houdini**<br>EMINEM (M.B.MATHERS III,S.H.MILLER,J.BASS,A.DUDLEY,K.BELL,T.C.HORN,M.MCLAREN) | **Eminem**<br>SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 2 | 2 |
| 12 | 11 | 9 | **Birds Of A Feather**<br>FINNEAS (B.E.O'CONNELL,F.B.O'CONNELL) | **Billie Eilish**<br>DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 9 | 4 |
| 7 | 8 | 10 | **Lose Control**<br>INFAMOUS,AMMO,J.BUNETTA (J.E.COLEMAN,J.C.BUNETTA,M.RODRIGUEZ-DIAZ,MIKKY EKKO,J.C.DIMSDALE) | **Teddy Swims**<br>SWIMS INT./WARNER | 1 | 44 |
| 9 | 9 | 11 | **Beautiful Things**<br>E.BLAIR (B.BOONE,E.BLAIR,J.L.LARSEN) | **Benson Boone**<br>NIGHT STREET/WARNER | 2 | 21 |
| 6 | 10 | 12 | **Pink Skies**<br>Z.L.BRYAN (Z.L.BRYAN) | **Zach Bryan**<br>BELTING BRONCO/WARNER/WAR | 6 | 3 |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | **Fortnight**<br>J.M.ANTONOFF,T.SWIFT (T.SWIFT,J.M.ANTONOFF,A.R.POST) | **Taylor Swift Featuring Post Malone**<br>REPUBLIC | 1 | 8 |
| 10 | 13 | 14 | **Lunch**<br>FINNEAS (B.E.O'CONNELL,F.B.O'CONNELL) | **Billie Eilish**<br>DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 5 | 4 |
| 13 | 14 | 15 | **Like That**<br>METRO BOOMIN (N.D.WILBURN,L.T.WAYNE,K.L.DUCKWORTH,R.OLIVER,J.COOLEY,K.HOOD,A.TILMON JR.) | **Future, Metro Boomin & Kendrick Lamar**<br>BOOMINATI/FREEBANDZ/REPUBLIC/EPIC | 1 | 12 |
| 14 | 16 | 16 | **Saturn**<br>C.LANG,R.BISEL,SOLOMONOPHONIC,MONSUNE (S.I.ROWE,C.LANG,R.BISEL,J.SOLOMON,S.ZHANG) | **SZA**<br>TOP DAWG/RCA | 6 | 16 |
| 20 | 19 | 17 | **Cowgirls**<br>J.MOI,J.DURRETT (R.H.BLOCK,A.G.GORLEY,J.MADDOCKS,E.K.SMITH,CHARLIE HANDSOME) | **Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST**<br>BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC | 17 | 26 |
| 15 | 17 | 18 | **We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love)**<br>A.GRANDE,MAX MARTIN,ILYA (A.GRANDE,MAX MARTIN,I.SALMANZADEH) | **Ariana Grande**<br>REPUBLIC | 1 | 14 |
| 25 | 20 | 19 | **Austin**<br>T.HEIDELMAN (A.D.NOVOTNY,K.T.HEIDELMAN,A.WENDLER,C.R.ARNSPIGER) | **Dasha**<br>VERSION III/WARNER/WMN | 19 | 14 |
| 39 | 15 | 20 | **Wanna Be**<br>ACE CHARISMA,PAYDAY,MKMENTALITY,YO GOTTI,ACE (G.WOODS,M.J.PETE,Y.M.DAVIS,A.FREEMAN, H.HIERMANN SOREBO,K.MEDER,M.MIMS,J.TAVERAS,P.D.BEAUREGARD,J.M.HOUSTON,M.WHITEMON, E.T.STEVENS,D.STEVENS,T.STEVENS) | **GloRilla & Megan Thee Stallion**<br>CMG/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 11 | 10 |

Go to the Chart Beat section of billboard.com for complete charts coverage.

SHERVIN LAINEZ

Dan Nigro, 42, produced and co-wrote Chappell Roan's "Good Luck, Babe!," which also reaches a new No. 25 high on Mainstream Top 40.

HOT 100

**21**

**"Good Luck, Babe!"**
Chappell Roan

**How did "Good Luck, Babe!" come together?**

**DAN NIGRO** We started the idea in November 2022. We wrote the original idea with Justin [Tranter], and then her and I wrote a lot of it afterward together. It's a song we wrestled with for a while — we knew something was special about the song, but we couldn't tell what we were getting wrong. Once we finally got it, it was such a relief. Kayleigh [Rose Amstutz, known professionally as Chappell Roan] and I are not people who go in the studio and write a song in one day. We take our time with it, comb over the lyrics, forget about it for a month and then come back with fresh ears. That to me is the biggest thing for us — listening with fresh ears. Luckily, Kayleigh is so good at having that insight.

**At what point in the process did you think the song would be a hit?**

When a song is difficult to get right, especially from the production side, I become so self-conscious of it while I'm working on it that I can never see it super clearly. I remember she texted me the day the song came out, being excited, and then her manager texted me and said, "This feels different." That is the crazy thing about being able to see the numbers in real time: You have absolutely no way of knowing, and then within 12 hours, people can tell you, "Oh, yeah. Audiences are really liking this one." This song was made during [the recording of 2023 debut album] *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*, and to me, it felt like it could have easily been on the record. But I'd like to think that because it came out at a different time, it held a different meaning and was a different vessel for the album.

**Why do you think this mainstream moment is happening for Chappell Roan now, both with this song and *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*?**

Three or four days into meeting her, I was convinced she was a superstar. I was so enamored by the way she thought about music. I've always felt that something like this was going to happen for her; the question was just when it would happen. It's wonderful to see this have such old-school success. I've told so many people, "This is the way things used to be — you would have to see the artist live, see them be good at what they do and then spread the word." She's so good at what she does that the system is working again. It really is that simple. —STEPHEN DAW

## HOT 100 FIRST-TIMERS

Artists who have recently made their initial appearances on the chart

| ARTIST | SONG | DEBUT POSITION | DEBUT DATE |
|---|---|---|---|
| Noeline Hofmann | "Purple Gas" with Zach Bryan | 70 | June 22 |

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE
BILLBOARD HOT 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR CURRENT SONGS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA BY ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE AND SALES DATA AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

NEW

BONUS DISTRIBUTION

*11,000-plus GRAMMY® Voters will be mailed a copy of this special issue.*

billboard

# GRAMMY FIRST LOOK

On July 20th, *Billboard* will publish a GRAMMY First Look special feature showcasing the artists, producers and other creative professionals whose music was released from Sept. 16, 2023-Aug. 30, 2024 and look at the early contenders for the 67th GRAMMY Awards® in the categories of record of the year, song of the year, album of the year and best new artist.

**7/17/24: Online Entry Process Opens**
**8/30/24: Online Entry Process Closes**

Take advantage of this early opportunity during this eligibility period to showcase accomplished work to the music industry as they prepare to cast their entries for Music's Biggest Night®.

**ISSUE DATE 7/20 AD CLOSE 7/9 MATERIALS DUE 7/11**

**CONTACTS**

**Joe Maimone** | joe.maimone@billboard.com **Cynthia Mellow** | cmellow615@gmail.com
**Ryan O'Donnell** | rodonnell@pmc.com **Marcia Olival** | marciaolival29@gmail.com
**Lee Ann Photoglo** | laphotoglo@gmail.com

## BILLBOARD 200

**3**

### Charli XCX
*Brat*

Her second top 10, and highest-charting album ever, debuts with a career-high 77,000 equivalent album units earned in the week ending June 13 in the United States, according to Luminate.

**5**

### Bon Jovi
*Forever*

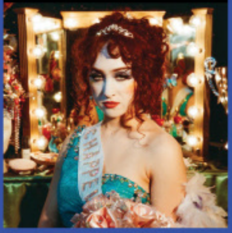
The band becomes the fifth group to achieve a newly charting top 10 album on the Billboard 200 in each of the last five decades (1980s-2020s), joining AC/DC, Def Leppard, Metallica and U2.

**27**

### Meghan Trainor
*Timeless*

Her sixth top 40-charting set launches with her best weekly equivalent album units sum (22,000) and album sales (12,000) since 2020. On Top Album Sales, it enters at No. 6.

**10**
**Chappell Roan**
*The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*



Chappell Roan's *The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess* reaches the top 10 for the first time, climbing 12-10 on the Billboard 200 with 39,000 equivalent album units earned (up 22%).

The set gains in the wake of recent press coverage of the singer-songwriter's buzzy performance at Governors Ball in New York on June 9 (the third day of the chart's tracking week).

*The Rise and Fall of a Midwest Princess*, released in September, reaches the top 10 in its 12th week on the chart — an atypical feat, as most albums that peak in that region of the Billboard 200 debut there. The last two current (noncatalog) albums to take longer trips to the top 10 were Noah Kahan's *Stick Season* (in its 29th week on the chart dated June 24, 2023) and Doja Cat's *Hot Pink* (27th week; May 16, 2020). —KEITH CAULFIELD

# Billboard 200

| 2 WKS. AGO | LAST WEEK | THIS WEEK | Artist / IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL | Title | PEAK POS. | WKS. ON CHART |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | #1 for 8 WEEKS **Taylor Swift** REPUBLIC | The Tortured Poets Department | 1 | 8 |
| 2 | 3 | 2 | **Billie Eilish** DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | Hit Me Hard And Soft | 2 | 4 |
| HOT SHOT DEBUT | | 3 | **Charli XCX** ATLANTIC/AG | Brat | 3 | 1 |
| 4 | 4 | 4 | **Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC | One Thing At A Time | 1 | 67 |
| NEW | | 5 | **Bon Jovi** CAPTAIN KID/ISLAND/REPUBLIC | Forever | 5 | 1 |
| - | 2 | 6 | **ATEEZ** KQ/RCA/HELLO82 | Golden Hour : Part.1 (EP) | 2 | 2 |
| 6 | 6 | 7 | **Morgan Wallen** BIG LOUD/REPUBLIC | Dangerous: The Double Album | 1 | 179 |
| 9 | 7 | 8 | **Noah Kahan** MERCURY/REPUBLIC | Stick Season | 2 | 81 |
| - | 5 | 9 | **Shaboozey** AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE | Where I've Been, Isn't Where I'm Going | 5 | 2 |
| 16 | 12 | 10 | **Chappell Roan** KRA/AMUSEMENT/ISLAND/REPUBLIC | The Rise And Fall Of A Midwest Princess | 10 | 12 |
| 7 | 8 | 11 | **Future & Metro Boomin** BOOMINATI/FREEBANDZ/REPUBLIC/EPIC | We Don't Trust You | 1 | 12 |
| 10 | 10 | 12 | **Zach Bryan** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER | Zach Bryan | 1 | 42 |
| 11 | 11 | 13 | **SZA** TOP DAWG/RCA | SOS | 1 | 79 |
| 8 | 9 | 14 | **Gunna** GUNNA/YOUNG STONER LIFE/300/3EE | One Of Wun | 2 | 5 |
| 12 | 14 | 15 | **Zach Bryan** BELTING BRONCO/WARNER | American Heartbreak | 5 | 108 |
| 13 | 13 | 16 | **Benson Boone** NIGHT STREET/WARNER | Fireworks & Rollerblades | 6 | 10 |
| 14 | 28 | 17 | GG **Post Malone** MERCURY/REPUBLIC | The Diamond Collection | 12 | 30 |
| 15 | 16 | 18 | **Taylor Swift** REPUBLIC | Lover | 1 | 251 |
| 19 | 19 | 19 | **Ariana Grande** REPUBLIC | Eternal Sunshine | 1 | 14 |
| 48 | 26 | 20 | **Eminem** SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/UME | Curtain Call: The Hits | 1 | 688 |

SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE
BILLBOARD 200: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

billboard

2024

# JOURNEY'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

Since the group's formation in 1973, JOURNEY has earned 19 top 40 singles, 25 gold and platinum albums, and has sold over 100 million albums globally. Its *Greatest Hits* album is certified 15 times-platinum, making JOURNEY one of the few bands to be diamond-certified, and its smash hit "Don't Stop Believin' " has been streamed over 1 billion times.

JOURNEY was inducted into the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame in 2017, and its 2018 co-headlining tour with Def Leppard was the band's most successful outing to date, landing it in the top 10 year-end touring chart with more than 1 million tickets sold and earning it the prestigious Billboard Legends of Live touring award. JOURNEY has also received a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and was inducted into the Hollywood Bowl Hall of Fame. Additionally, the band is the subject of the award-winning documentary *Don't Stop Believin': Everyman's Journey* about the group's resurgence upon adding Arnel Pineda as lead singer after JOURNEY founder Neal Schon discovered the Filipino native on YouTube.

Please join *Billboard* as we celebrate the 50 years of JOURNEY's success as one of the most compelling acts in the history of American rock.

## CONTACTS

**East Coast/Midwest: Joe Maimone** | joe.maimone@billboard.com

**Touring and West Coast: Cynthia Mellow** | cmellow615@gmail.com

**International: Ryan O'Donnell** | rodonnell@pmc.com

**Latin: Marcia Olival** | marciaolival29@gmail.com

**Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo** | laphotoglo@gmail.com

**ISSUE DATE 7/20 | AD CLOSE 7/9 | MATERIALS DUE 7/11**

ARTIST 100

# 16

HOZIER

WEEKS ON CHART

125

"Too Sweet" becomes Hozier's first No. 1 on the all-format Radio Songs chart, with 70.5 million in audience, up 7%, June 7-13, according to Luminate. He previously peaked at No. 3 with "Take Me to Church" in 2015. His latest single also earns him his initial Mainstream Top 40 leader. —GARY TRUST

NO. 2

## 'Feather' Flies To Top 10

"Birds of a Feather" by Billie Eilish (above) ascends 11-9 on the Billboard Hot 100. It drew 30.7 million streams (up 8%) and 3.2 million in airplay audience (up 221%) and sold 3,000 (up 9%) in the tracking week. The singer-songwriter adds her seventh top 10 on the chart, and second from her new album, *Hit Me Hard and Soft*, following the No. 5-peaking "Lunch." Both songs are earning support at pop radio, as "Lunch" rises 17-16 on Mainstream Top 40 and "Feather" enters at No. 39. "Lunch" also ranks in the top 20 on Alternative Airplay and Adult Top 40. —G.T.

NO. 9

## Radio Loves Lamar's 'Not Like Us'

A week after Kendrick Lamar's "Not Like Us" topped Rhythmic Airplay for its first *Billboard* radio crown, the song adds three more to its collection. It surges 5-1 on Mainstream R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay with an 11% increase in plays in the tracking week; pushes 3-1 on R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay, up 13% to 16.7 million in format audience; and rises 2-1 on Rap Airplay, vaulting by 14% in listener reach. The wins give Lamar a sixth No. 1 on both Mainstream R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay and Rap Airplay and a fourth leader on R&B/Hip-Hop Airplay. —TREVOR ANDERSON

# Artist 100

| 2 WKS. AGO | LAST WEEK | THIS WEEK | Artist | IMPRINT/LABEL | PEAK POS. | WKS. ON CHART |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | 1 | #1 for 113 WEEKS Taylor Swift | REPUBLIC | 1 | 516 |
| 3 | 3 | 2 | Billie Eilish | DARKROOM/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 1 | 295 |
| 5 | 5 | 3 | Morgan Wallen | BIG LOUD/MERCURY/REPUBLIC | 1 | 275 |
| 12 | 12 | 4 | Sabrina Carpenter | ISLAND/REPUBLIC | 4 | 28 |
| RE-ENTRY | | 5 | Bon Jovi | CAPTAIN KID/ISLAND/REPUBLIC | 1 | 21 |
| RE-ENTRY | | 6 | Charli XCX | ASYLUM/ATLANTIC/AG | 6 | 38 |
| 7 | 7 | 7 | Zach Bryan | BELTING BRONCO/WARNER | 1 | 109 |
| - | 2 | 8 | ATEEZ | KQ/RCA/HELLO82 | 2 | 24 |
| 6 | 6 | 9 | Kendrick Lamar | PGLANG/TOP DAWG/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 1 | 441 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | Luke Combs | RIVER HOUSE/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE/SMN | 1 | 380 |
| - | 4 | 11 | Eminem | SHADY/AFTERMATH/INTERSCOPE/ICLG | 1 | 479 |
| 14 | 15 | 12 | Jelly Roll | BAILEE & BUDDY/BROKEN BOW/BMG/BBMG | 4 | 100 |
| 11 | 8 | 13 | Shaboozey | AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE | 8 | 9 |
| 9 | 10 | 14 | Post Malone | MERCURY/REPUBLIC | 1 | 416 |
| 10 | 11 | 15 | SZA | TOP DAWG/RCA | 1 | 250 |
| 15 | 14 | 16 | Hozier | RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA | 3 | 125 |
| 13 | 13 | 17 | Benson Boone | NIGHT STREET/WARNER | 6 | 21 |
| 16 | 16 | 18 | Teddy Swims | SWIMS INT./WARNER | 7 | 40 |
| 18 | 19 | 19 | Chris Stapleton | SOUND/MERCURY NASHVILLE/UMGN | 1 | 451 |
| 25 | 26 | 20 | Chappell Roan | KRA/AMUSEMENT/ISLAND/REPUBLIC | 19 | 9 |

HOZIER: BARRY MCCALL. EILISH: PETROS STUDIO. LAMAR: SWAN GALLET FOR WWD.

AIRPLAY, SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

BILLBOARD ARTIST 100: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR ARTISTS ACROSS ALL GENRES, RANKED BY ALBUM AND TRACK SALES AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE, RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS AS MEASURED BY LUMINATE, STREAMING ACTIVITY DATA FROM ONLINE MUSIC SOURCES TRACKED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

billboard

CLIVE DAVIS
INSTITUTE
OF RECORDED MUSIC

2024

# THE CLIVE DAVIS INSTITUTE OF RECORDED MUSIC

## 20TH ANNIVERSARY

The Clive Davis Institute at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts is the first and only program of its kind to provide professional business, artistic and academic training toward a BFA in recorded music.

CDI recently relocated to Brooklyn, at 370 Jay St. — NYU's new home for media, technology and the arts.

For 20 years, CDI has provided students with the necessary tools to become visionary creative entrepreneurs in the evolving global music industry. To honor CDI's mission of higher education and support of the next generation of music industry leaders, please join *Billboard* in congratulating the institute and its founder, Mr. Clive Davis, on its 20th anniversary.

### CONTACTS

**East Coast/Midwest: Joe Maimone** | joe.maimone@billboard.com

**Touring and West Coast: Cynthia Mellow** | cmellow615@gmail.com

**International: Ryan O'Donnell** | rodonnell@pmc.com

**Latin: Marcia Olival** | marciaolival29@gmail.com

**Southeast: Lee Ann Photoglo** | laphotoglo@gmail.com

**ISSUE DATE 8/24 | AD CLOSE 8/13 | MATERIALS DUE 8/15**

ALLISTER ANN

# Country Airplay

| 2 WKS. AGO | LAST WEEK | THIS WEEK | Artist / Title / Imprint/Promotion Label | PEAK POS. | WKS. ON CHART |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 3 | 4 | 1 | #1 for 1 WEEK **Take Her Home** — Kenny Chesney — BLUE CHAIR/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WEA | 1 | 31 |
| 4 | 3 | 2 | **I Had Some Help** — Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen — MERCURY/REPUBLIC/BIG LOUD | 2 | 6 |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | **Where It Ends** — Bailey Zimmerman — ELEKTRA/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WEA | 1 | 37 |
| 2 | 1 | 4 | **Halfway To Hell** — Jelly Roll — BAILEE & BUDDY/BROKEN BOW/BMG/STONEY CREEK | 1 | 22 |
| 7 | 5 | 5 | **Your Place** — Ashley Cooke — BACK BLOCKS/BIG LOUD | 5 | 26 |
| 11 | 7 | 6 | **Cowgirls** — Morgan Wallen Featuring ERNEST — MERCURY/REPUBLIC/BIG LOUD | 6 | 10 |
| 9 | 8 | 7 | **We Ride** — Bryan Martin — AVERAGE JOES | 7 | 37 |
| 5 | 6 | 8 | **Outskirts** — Sam Hunt — MCA NASHVILLE | 1 | 47 |
| 10 | 9 | 9 | **Bulletproof** — Nate Smith — RCA NASHVILLE | 9 | 18 |
| 12 | 10 | 10 | **Let Your Boys Be Country** — Jason Aldean — MACON/BROKEN BOW | 8 | 29 |
| 13 | 11 | 11 | **Young Love & Saturday Nights** — Chris Young — RCA NASHVILLE | 11 | 40 |
| 14 | 12 | 12 | **Dirt Cheap** — Cody Johnson — COJO/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN | 12 | 22 |
| 20 | 17 | 13 | **Ain't No Love In Oklahoma** — Luke Combs — UNIVERSAL STUDIOS/ATLANTIC/SEVEN RIDGES/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE | 13 | 5 |
| 18 | 15 | 14 | **She's Somebody's Daughter (Reimagined)** — Drew Baldridge — PATOKA SOUNDS/LYRIC RIDGE | 14 | 33 |
| 16 | 14 | 15 | **Love You Again** — Chase Matthew — CHASE MATTHEW/WARNER MUSIC NASHVILLE/WMN | 14 | 55 |
| 15 | 13 | 16 | **We Don't Fight Anymore** — Carly Pearce Featuring Chris Stapleton — BIG MACHINE | 13 | 52 |
| 17 | 16 | 17 | **Chevrolet** — Dustin Lynch Featuring Jelly Roll — BROKEN BOW | 16 | 27 |
| 19 | 18 | 18 | **I'm Not Pretty** — Megan Moroney — MEGAN MORONEY/COLUMBIA/COLUMBIA NASHVILLE | 18 | 45 |
| 24 | 22 | 19 | **A Bar Song (Tipsy)** — Shaboozey — AMERICAN DOGWOOD/EMPIRE/MAGNOLIA MUSIC | 19 | 7 |
| 21 | 19 | 20 | **Hang Tight Honey** — Lainey Wilson — BROKEN BOW | 19 | 5 |

**COUNTRY AIRPLAY**

**1**

**"Take Her Home"**
Kenny Chesney

**KENNY CHESNEY BANKS** his record-extending 33rd No. 1 on *Billboard*'s Country Airplay chart with "Take Her Home." The love song increased by 13% to 30.1 million audience impressions June 7-13, according to Luminate. Since the list launched in January 1990, Tim McGraw ranks second with 29 No. 1s, followed by Blake Shelton with 28.

"It's amazing how slices of the way life turns and the chances you take always hit people where they live," Chesney says. "I'm honored to have this No. 1, but I'm also glad all the people living regular lives got to see themselves in 'Take Her Home.' This feels like all the people who love these songs are winning, too."

Zach Abend, HARDY and Hunter Phelps co-wrote the track, and Chesney co-produced it with Buddy Cannon. It's the lead single from Chesney's album *Born*, which arrived at its No. 5 high on Top Country Albums in April, becoming his 22nd top 10.

Chesney notches his first Country Airplay No. 1 since he featured on Kelsea Ballerini's "half of my hometown," which led for a week in March 2022. The Knoxville, Tenn., native first reigned with "She's Got It All" for three weeks beginning in August 1997.

Meanwhile, Post Malone's "I Had Some Help" (featuring Morgan Wallen) ascends 3-2 in just its sixth week on Country Airplay (29.7 million, up 10%). It wraps the fastest trip to the top two since Garth Brooks' "More Than a Memory" became the only hit in the chart's history to open at the summit in September 2007. The collaboration spends a fifth week at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 and Hot Country Songs.

—JIM ASKER

AIRPLAY DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

COUNTRY AIRPLAY: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR SONGS RANKED BY COUNTRY RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS, AS MEASURED BY MEDIABASE AND PROVIDED BY LUMINATE. STATIONS ARE ELECTRONICALLY MONITORED 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

ascap

# CELEBRATES BLACK MUSIC MONTH

**With gratitude to our global community of Black music creators for shaping our culture.**

NO. 1

## Swift Scores 13th No. 1

Taylor Swift's signature number, 13, now matches her career total of No. 1s on the Adult Top 40 chart as she claims her latest leader on the airplay list with "Fortnight" (featuring Post Malone). She boasts the most No. 1s among soloists; overall, only Maroon 5 has more, with 15. Post adds his second chart-topper after "Circles" reigned for four weeks in 2020.

"Fortnight" blasted onto the Adult Top 40 chart dated May 4 at No. 9. The launch tied for the highest in the ranking's history — matching the arrival of Swift's own "Shake It Off" in 2014. The lead single from Swift's album *The Tortured Poets Department* debuted at No. 1 on the Billboard Hot 100 in May, leading for two weeks. It became her 12th leader and Post's second. The set has spent its first eight weeks running at No. 1 on the Billboard 200 (see page 10).

—GARY TRUST

## Adult Top 40

| Last Week | This Week | Title / Imprint/Promotion Label | Artist | Wks. on Chart |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 2 | 1 | #1 for 1 WEEK **Fortnight** REPUBLIC | Taylor Swift Featuring Post Malone | 8 |
| 4 | 2 | **Too Sweet** RUBYWORKS/COLUMBIA | Hozier | 10 |
| 1 | 3 | **Beautiful Things** NIGHT STREET/WARNER | Benson Boone | 19 |
| 3 | 4 | **Lose Control** SWIMS INT./WARNER | Teddy Swims | 45 |
| 6 | 5 | **We Can't Be Friends (Wait For Your Love)** REPUBLIC | Ariana Grande | 14 |
| 5 | 6 | **Feather** ISLAND/REPUBLIC | Sabrina Carpenter | 20 |
| 8 | 7 | **I Had Some Help** MERCURY/REPUBLIC | Post Malone Featuring Morgan Wallen | 6 |
| 7 | 8 | **Stick Season** MERCURY/REPUBLIC | Noah Kahan | 23 |
| 9 | 9 | **Save Me** BAILEE & BUDDY/BROKEN BOW/BMG | Jelly Roll With Lainey Wilson | 21 |
| 11 | 10 | **Illusion** WARNER | Dua Lipa | 9 |

NO. 1

## El Fantasma Finally Finishes First

El Fantasma scores his first leader on the Latin Airplay chart with "Sabor a Michelada." With the *cumbia*- and *banda*-blended song, the singer-songwriter rules after logging 10 previous top 10s on the overall radio ranking. The single rises 14-1 with 8.5 million audience impressions, up 71%, in the United States June 7-13, according to Luminate. WOJO-FM Chicago had the most audience impressions for the song (1.3 million) among chart reporters in the tracking week.

"Sabor a Michelada" also gives El Fantasma his seventh No. 1 on Regional Mexican Airplay — and his second this year — as the song climbs 6-1 with Greatest Gainer honors (awarded weekly to the track with the largest surge in audience).

The achievements land during the Mexican artist's Se Activó la Chavalada tour, which continues through Nov. 27.

—PAMELA BUSTIOS

## Latin Airplay

| Last Week | This Week | Title / Imprint/Promotion Label | Artist | Wks. on Chart |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 14 | 1 | #1 for 1 WEEK **Sabor A Michelada** AFINARTE | El Fantasma | 5 |
| 1 | 2 | **Amor** ATLANTIC/WARNER LATINA | Danny Ocean | 6 |
| 12 | 3 | **Igual Que Un Angel** GEFFEN/ICLG | Kali Uchis & Peso Pluma | 10 |
| 4 | 4 | **Perro Negro** RIMAS | Bad Bunny & Feid | 23 |
| 5 | 5 | **La Capi** ONE WORLD INTERNATIONAL/WARNER/WARNER LATINA | Myke Towers | 12 |
| 3 | 6 | **(Entre Parentesis)** SONY MUSIC LATIN | Shakira & Grupo Frontera | 12 |
| 6 | 7 | **Punteria** SONY MUSIC LATIN | Shakira & Cardi B | 12 |
| 11 | 8 | **Ale Ale** SONY MUSIC LATIN | Marc Anthony | 7 |
| 7 | 9 | **Luna** UNIVERSAL MUSIC LATINO/UMLE | Feid & ATL Jacob | 19 |
| 10 | 10 | **El Humo de Mi Gallo** FONOVISA/UMLE | Banda Los Sebastianes de Saul Plata x Edgardo Nunez | 7 |

SWIFT: TAS RIGHTS MANAGEMENT. EL FANTASMA: AFINARTE MUSIC.

AIRPLAY DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

ADULT TOP 40: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR SONGS RANKED BY ADULT TOP 40 RADIO AIRPLAY DETECTIONS, AS MEASURED BY MEDIABASE AND PROVIDED BY LUMINATE. STATIONS ARE ELECTRONICALLY MONITORED 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. LATIN AIRPLAY: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR SONGS RANKED BY LATIN RADIO AIRPLAY AUDIENCE IMPRESSIONS, AS MEASURED BY MEDIABASE AND PROVIDED BY LUMINATE. STATIONS ARE ELECTRONICALLY MONITORED 24 HOURS A DAY, SEVEN DAYS A WEEK. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

# BLACK MUSIC MONTH

THIS BLACK MUSIC MONTH,
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP IS PROUD TO SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS
WORKING TO PRESERVE, PROTECT, AND CULTIVATE
BLACK MUSIC FOR GENERATIONS TO COME, INCLUDING:

THE ATLANTA MUSIC PROJECT • THE BILLIE HOLIDAY THEATRE
BLACK VIOLIN FOUNDATION • THE BLUES FOUNDATION
BAM (BROOKLYN ACADEMY OF MUSIC) • THE CHICAGO WEST COMMUNITY CENTER
CREATIVE NOMADS • DC YOUTH ORCHESTRA PROGRAM
DECOLONIZING THE MUSIC ROOM • ELEMENTZ • THE ELLIS MARSALIS CENTER FOR MUSIC
GIRLS MAKE BEATS • THE HARMONY PROJECT
THE KENNEDY CENTER HIP HOP CULTURE AND CONTEMPORARY MUSIC PROGRAM
THE MEMPHIS MUSIC INITIATIVE • THE MUSIC MAKER RELIEF FOUNDATION
THE NATIONAL BLACK ARTS FESTIVAL • PLAY ON PHILLY
ROOTS OF MUSIC • THE SOULSVILLE FOUNDATION

UNIVERSAL
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

TFMC
TASK FORCE FOR
MEANINGFUL CHANGE
UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

NO. 1

## Premier Placement For *Plays Metallica*

Apocalyptica (above) earns its first No. 1 on the Classical Crossover Albums chart with *Plays Metallica, Vol. 2*. The set is the long-awaited follow-up to the Finnish trio's 1996 debut, *Plays Metallica by Four Cellos*.

On the new album, Apocalyptica performs cello-driven covers of Metallica songs such as "Ride the Lightning," "St. Anger," "The Unforgiven II" and "One," the lattermost featuring Metallica members James Hetfield and Robert Trujillo. The set is Apocalyptica's 10th studio album and first since 2020's *Cell-0*, which reached No. 2 on Classical Crossover Albums.

While mostly known for instrumentals, Apocalyptica enjoyed U.S. rock radio success in the late 2000s and early 2010s through collaborations with vocalists including Adam Gontier and Corey Taylor. In 2008, "I'm Not Jesus" (featuring Taylor) hit No. 6 on Mainstream Rock Airplay and "I Don't Care" (featuring Gontier) rose to No. 1 on Mainstream Rock Airplay and No. 2 on Alternative Airplay.

—KEVIN RUTHERFORD

## Classical Crossover Albums

| LAST WEEK | THIS WEEK | Artist / IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL | Title | WKS. ON CHART |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| RE-ENTRY | 1 | **#1 for 1 WEEK** Apocalyptica / THROWDOWN/BMG | Plays Metallica, Vol. 2 | 1 |
| 3 | 2 | Soundtrack / SHONDALAND/NETFLIX/CAPITOL/ICLG | Bridgerton Season Three (Covers From The Netflix Series) (Pt. 1) | 5 |
| RE-ENTRY | 3 | Jennifer Thomas / JENNIFER THOMAS | Oceans | 1 |
| 2 | 4 | Various Artists / CONCORD THEATRICALS/CONCORD | My Favorite Things: The Rodgers & Hammerstein 80th Anniversary Concert | 2 |
| RE-ENTRY | 5 | Soundtrack / NETFLIX/CAPITOL/ICLG | Bridgerton Season Three (Covers From The Netflix Series) | 1 |
| 1 | 6 | Joe Hisaishi / Royal Philharmonic Orchestra / DEUTSCHE GRAMMOPHON/VLG | A Symphonic Celebration | 48 |
| 4 | 7 | Vitamin String Quartet / VITAMIN | VSQ Performs Taylor Swift | 8 |
| 5 | 8 | Soundtrack / NETFLIX/LEGACY | Queen Charlotte: A Bridgerton Story, Covers From The Netflix Series | 30 |
| RE-ENTRY | 9 | Soundtrack / NETFLIX/CAPITOL/ICLG | Bridgerton Season Three | 1 |
| 8 | 10 | Il Divo / IL DIVO/THIRTY TIGERS | XX: 20th Anniversary Album | 17 |

NO. 8

## Lauper's *Canary* Still Perched In Top 10

Cyndi Lauper spends a second week in the top 10 of the Soundtracks chart with the companion album to her new documentary, *Let the Canary Sing*, which premiered June 4 on Paramount+. The set earned 5,000 equivalent album units in the United States June 7-13, according to Luminate.

The collection includes Lauper's eight Billboard Hot 100 top 10s, all achieved in 1984-89, including her breakthrough classic, "Girls Just Want To Have Fun," and the No. 1s "Time After Time" and "True Colors." It also features such deep cuts as 1993's acclaimed "Sally's Pigeons," which she wrote with Mary Chapin Carpenter.

Lauper is set to kick off her Girls Just Wanna Have Fun Farewell Tour in Montreal on Oct. 18. "I'd like to say 'thank you' and come up with things that people are gonna have fun and laugh with," she recently told *Variety*. "Laughter is so important, and having a good time is important. So I want them [to] celebrate them."

—GARY TRUST

## Soundtracks

| LAST WEEK | THIS WEEK | Artist / IMPRINT/DISTRIBUTING LABEL | Title | WKS. ON CHART |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1 | **#1 for 30 WEEKS** Soundtrack / MATTEL/WATERTOWER/ATLANTIC/AG | Barbie: The Album | 47 |
| 2 | 2 | Soundtrack / WALT DISNEY | Moana | 395 |
| 3 | 3 | Melanie Martinez / ATLANTIC/AG | K-12 | 247 |
| 5 | 4 | Soundtrack / PRIME VIDEO/A24 | Hazbin Hotel, Season One | 19 |
| 6 | 5 | Soundtrack / WALT DISNEY | Encanto | 67 |
| RE-ENTRY | 6 | Soundtrack / WALT DISNEY | Frozen: The Songs | 260 |
| 8 | 7 | Soundtrack / FOX/20TH CENTURY/ATLANTIC/AG | The Greatest Showman | 340 |
| 7 | 8 | Cyndi Lauper / EPIC/LEGACY | Let The Canary Sing | 2 |
| 9 | 9 | Soundtrack / WALT DISNEY | Wish | 30 |
| 10 | 10 | Soundtrack / DREAMWORKS/RCA | Trolls: Band Together | 31 |

APOCALYPTICA: RIKI MURTO. LAUPER: TIMOTHY GREENFIELD-SANDERS.

SALES AND STREAMING DATA COMPILED BY LUMINATE

CLASSICAL CROSSOVER ALBUMS: THE WEEK'S TOP-SELLING CLASSICAL CROSSOVER ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SOUNDTRACKS: THE WEEK'S MOST POPULAR SOUNDTRACK ALBUMS, BASED ON MULTIMETRIC CONSUMPTION, BLENDING TRADITIONAL ALBUM SALES, STREAMING-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS AND TRACK-EQUIVALENT ALBUMS, AS COMPILED BY LUMINATE. SEE CHARTS LEGEND ON BILLBOARD.COM FOR COMPLETE RULES AND EXPLANATIONS. © 2024 BILLBOARD MEDIA LLC AND LUMINATE INC. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

We proudly congratulate David Furnish on being named 2024 Billboard Pride Executive of the Year
Your dedication to the celebration of love, acceptance, diversity and inclusivity through culture and entertainment is inspiring.
Disney
©Disney

NATIONAL INDEPENDENT VENUE
NIVF
FOUNDATION

# EMPOWERING

## MORE INCLUSIVE AND SUSTAINABLE INDEPENDENT LIVE ENTERTAINMENT COMMUNITIES.

The National Independent Venue Foundation (NIVF) strives for authentic investment in the diversity of our communities, empowering independent live venues and promoters to have an opportunity to be catalysts for change.

NIVF's Workforce Development Program is designed to advance and strengthen the training of current and future workers in independent live performance spaces. In addition to NIVF's free monthly virtual training sessions, NIVF launched its **Venue Operations Experience (VOX)**, a four-month workforce development program for selected participants from under-recognized groups in the industry (LGBTQ+, BIPOC, women, and people with disabilities), that are interested in careers within live entertainment venues.

**NIVF's Emergency Relief Fund (ERF)** is dedicated to providing economic relief to independent, live performance venues and promoters across the U.S. experiencing a critically severe emergency due to circumstances beyond their control. The ERF holistically covers unforeseeable situations beyond recipients' control, including but not limited to natural disasters, natural hazards, man-made disasters, or acts of terrorism.

## IMPACT OVERVIEW

- **$300,000 in Emergency Relief Fund grants supporting 14 independent venues in 11 states**
- **Awarded more than a dozen minority-owned venues**
- **32 Venue Operations eXperience interns in ten host venues nationwide, assigned to 16 industry expert mentors**
- **To date, the VOX cohorts represent 90% women / 65% LGBTQ+ / 65% BIPOC**
- **750+ independent venues, promoters, and industry businesses represented across 29 free workforce development training sessions, with over 3,000 registered attendees**
- **66% of session attendees identify as female, genderfluid, genderqueer or nonbinary**

**SCAN TO DONATE**

CONNECT WITH US ONLINE AT **NIVF.ORG**

### Voices of Change

We're donating our ad space in *Billboard* to amplify voices of activists, organizations, and charities that reflect our core values and are creating real change.

Our Pride Movers and Shakers honorees - Annie Brinn and Andrew Ludwick - have chosen to spotlight the National Independent Venue Foundation for their commitment to building initiatives and resources to support the ecosystem of independent live performance venues and promoters across the U.S.

WARNER MUSIC GROUP

# market

PG. 22 BEATS LIBRARIES LURE COUNTRY SONGWRITERS
PG. 24 ARTISTS TINKER WITH ALTERNATIVE ROLLOUTS
PG. 26 WILLIE "PROPHET" STIGGERS ON BMAC'S PROGRESS

MUSIC AND MONEY

GARLAND: WIN MCNAMEE/GETTY IMAGES. RAPINO: LIVE NATION. MARCIANO: ROB KIM/GETTY IMAGES. MICKELSON: CHRIS WALKER/CHICAGO TRIBUNE/TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE/GETTY IMAGES. GROETZINGER: MANDEL NGAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES.

# Live Nation Lawsuit: Pre-Trial Discoveries

The U.S. Department of Justice's antitrust action will probably take years to resolve, but its complaint hints at the probable winners and losers

BY DAVE BROOKS // ILLUSTRATION BY MATTHEW BILLINGTON

**GIVEN THE GLACIAL** pace at which federal antitrust litigation moves, the U.S. Department of Justice's historic lawsuit against Live Nation and its wholly owned subsidiary Ticketmaster is expected to take years to wind its way through the legal system whether it's fully adjudicated or the live-event Goliath agrees to make changes to its business, which the government often terms "behavioral remedies."

And though it's clearly too early to predict how the case will play out, legal expert and antitrust attorney Lawrence J. White from New York University's Stern School of Business says the potential winners and losers have already been largely predetermined based on hints found in the 128-page complaint that the DOJ filed May 23 in U.S. District Court in the Southern District of New York.

"The companies mentioned in the complaint as being the most harmed by anti-competitive behavior are typically the same companies that stand the most to gain in the solution," White says.

In the case of Live Nation, the winners will very likely be the company's main concert promotion rival, AEG Presents; secondary-market ticketing competitor SeatGeek; and a handful of major independent promoters like Chicago's Jam Productions. The losers would likely be Live Nation; Irving Azoff and Tim Leiweke's venue owner, management and hospitality company, Oak View Group — which the DOJ alleges "has described itself as a 'hammer' and 'protect[or]' for Live Nation" — as well as, potentially, major artist management companies and talent agencies, depending on the government's solution for more competitive ticket pricing.

"The government tends to rely on private companies to carry out its policy goals during the remedy phase of an antitrust case," explains White, pointing toward the original consent decree drafted around the 2010 merger of Live Nation and Ticketmaster. That agreement unsuccessfully propped up two private companies — AEG and Comcast Spectacor — to serve as competitors to Ticketmaster.

Whether the DOJ wins in court or ends up settling with Live Nation, White says it will lean on large corporations to assist with enforcement of the ruling. As Live Nation's only major competitor for

[redacted]

**Sean "Diddy" Combs** sold his shares in **REVOLT**, whose employees will now be its largest group of shareholders.

[redacted]

**Spotify** is raising subscription prices for U.S. premium users for the second consecutive year.

**Ariana Grande** will continue doing business with **HYBE** and **Scooter Braun** under her new manager, **Brandon Creed**.

**The Black Keys** split with managers **Irving Azoff** and **Steve Moir** following the cancellation of the band's North American arena tour.

ticketing and concert promotion, AEG, which owns AXS Ticketing, is an obvious choice as a DOJ partner because of the company's large scale, which will be critical for the DOJ's long-shot goal to lower ticket prices. (The DOJ is believed to have interviewed more than 100 individuals from the live-music industry as part of its recent antitrust investigation into Live Nation.)

In a May 23 press release that announced the lawsuit filing, Attorney General Merrick Garland said, "We allege that Live Nation relies on unlawful, anti-competitive conduct to exercise its monopolistic control over the live-events industry in the United States at the cost of fans, artists, smaller promoters and venue operators." He contends that increasing competition among Live Nation's ticketing rivals and in the artist promotion space will lower the face value prices of tickets.

Prior to the 2010 merger of Live Nation and Ticketmaster, four or five ticketing companies were capable of competing with the latter at the arena level. In 2024, only two remain: AXS and SeatGeek, the secondary site that also happens to own one of the only primary ticketing products capable of servicing major arenas and stadiums. In a statement released to *Billboard*, SeatGeek said, "We are hopeful that the Department of Justice's antitrust lawsuit to break up the Live Nation-Ticketmaster monopoly will restore fair market competition to live entertainment."

> **"The companies mentioned in the complaint as being the most harmed by anti-competitive behavior are typically the same companies that stand the most to gain in the solution."**
>
> — LAWRENCE J. WHITE, ATTORNEY

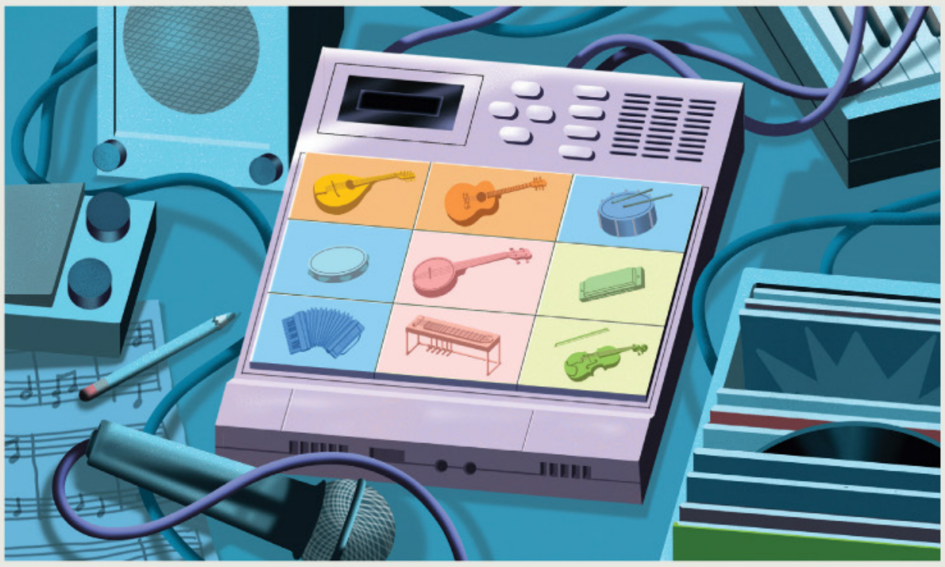
On the concert promotion front, there are far fewer major independent promoters now than there were prior to 2010 and only a handful capable of touring major arena acts across the country. In addition to Jam Productions, they include Nashville's Outback Concerts and Another Planet Entertainment in the San Francisco Bay Area. All three promoters declined to comment for this story.

In a May 31 letter to his staff, AEG chairman/CEO Jay Marciano outlined how the DOJ could make concert promotion fairer and drive down the cost of ticketing by dismantling Live Nation's "flywheel" business model, which is cited in the DOJ's complaint and described in its May 23 press release as "a self-reinforcing business model that captures fees and revenue from concert fans and sponsorship, uses that revenue to lock up artists to exclusive promotion deals and then uses its powerful cache of live content to sign venues into long-term exclusive ticketing deals, thereby starting the cycle all over again."

Marciano's letter said Live Nation's flywheel model "deploys the excessive profits of its ticketing monopoly to outspend what the concert market can profitably sustain."

Under this theory, ticket prices would drop if Live Nation was prevented from using its other revenue sources to overpay artists and compete with other promoters offering artists an 85/15 or a 90/10 split on ticket sales.

Although the theory is not widely accepted by most major talent agents or managers — IAG executive vp/head of global music Jarred Arfa calls it "unrealistic" and "illogical" — it is gaining popularity among large indie promoters and DOJ lawyers, sources tell *Billboard*. White notes that whether the government settles or takes Ticketmaster to trial will depend on "the time and resources the DOJ wants to expend on the case and the evidence against Live Nation it has collected." ■



# Guitars, Cadillacs... Beats

## Country songwriters are marketing their work on sample libraries

**LAST JULY,** more than 70 country songwriters and producers filed into Sony Music Publishing's Nashville office to hear a presentation from Beatstars, a popular website that allows artists to buy or lease full instrumentals for their own use. In attendance was Seth Mosley, whose recent co-writes include songs recorded by Tim McGraw and Gabby Barrett. Mosley says he was compelled by the company's pitch and started regularly posting beats on the platform in December.

It's an unusual way of working in country music, but Mosley and others are hoping it can provide them with a new income stream — and another source of exposure.

Beatstars was initially popularized by artists making hip-hop, R&B and pop; genres where each track on an album might be overseen by someone different and contain elements from a beat-maker that neither the artist nor the producer has met.

"It's so not how the Nashville creative community operates," says Kenley Flynn, vp of creative for Sony Music Publishing Nashville. "Writers are used to creating from 11 a.m. till 3 p.m. in a room with two or three others," often people they know. And when it comes to producers, artists often find one they like, "and he'll just cut everything," Mosley says.

With time, though, Beatstars' success stories have spread to realms once ruled by bands playing instruments. ThxSoMch and Wisp found post-punk and neo-shoegaze instrumentals, respectively, on the platform; added their own vocals; and scored breakout moments and major-label deals.

Country could be the next frontier, according to Beatstars president of music and publishing Greg Mateo, who says he's seeing heightened interest in the genre as its popularity surges. "Anything that's got a Morgan Wallen spin is in high demand," Mosley says.

Bandlab, a mobile music-creation app with more than 100 million users, has also seen excitement for country elevate in the United States, according to CEO Meng Ru Kuok. And statistics from Splice, which provides producers with a massive library of samples, indicate that, in 2024, searches for "country" by its 8 million-strong user base have more than doubled compared with last year. Searches for samples of instruments associated with the genre have also soared, including banjo (up 75%), mandolin (66%), pedal steel (113%), and fiddle (131%).

Producer BachBeats, who sells country instrumentals online, predicts this enthusiasm is only going to grow: Post Malone and Wallen's collaboration, "I Had Some Help," which landed one of the biggest streaming debuts in history, "is going to bring a bunch of people from the hip-hop world into country," he predicts. Beyoncé's *Cowboy Carter* helped, too, according to Xzaviar, another producer who sells country downloads. He says his income from country beat sales — 35% of which comes from outside the United States — have quadrupled since August, with Wallen- and Zach Bryan-style instrumentals performing especially well.

The economics of these platforms also position them to help aspiring country stars. "If you're bartending to make money and work on your music part time, it can be very expensive to get in a room with a full band," says Nashville-based rapper-singer David Morris, who works with BachBeats and other country producers on Beatstars. "You need to be able to explore your sound or write to music, and you can lease some of these beats for less than $100." (A lease comes with only limited rights and requires a new deal if a song hits.)

As labels sign a new generation of country artists and songwriters who are more familiar with the online music-making economy, those creators "are going to use the modern tools," says Corey McAfee, director of global copyright for Sony Music Publishing Nashville.

—ELIAS LEIGHT

# UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

CONGRATULATES THE 2024 PRIDE EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

# DAVID FURNISH

AND IS PROUD TO SUPPORT THE INCREDIBLE WORK OF THE

# ELTON JOHN AIDS FOUNDATION

MUSIC IS UNIVERSAL

UNIVERSAL

UNIVERSAL MUSIC GROUP

**CTS Eventim** completed its acquisition of **Vivendi's** festival and ticketing businesses for $327 million.

**Merlin** launched **Merlin Connect**, a new initiative designed to help emerging social and tech platforms license independent music.

# SWIMMING AGAINST THE STREAM

Artists are experimenting with alternative rollout strategies to better market and monetize their music

BY ELIAS LEIGHT

**WHEN NXWORRIES,** the duo of Anderson .Paak and Knxwledge, released its second album, *Why Lawd?*, on June 7, it was made available on vinyl, CD and cassette. But fans had to wait a week to stream it. The goal was "to re-create the nostalgic feeling of truly appreciating the experience of a physical product that we all grew up with in the pre-streaming era," says Anna Savage, who manages .Paak.

Jason McGuire, GM of NxWorries' label, Stone's Throw, adds, "We wanted to do something special for their fans by giving them an opportunity to experience the record a little earlier." Combined with a pop-up event in Los Angeles, he says the aim is to get "more people talking about the record leading up to the streaming date."

Most albums today are released simultaneously on streaming services and in physical formats — or with vinyl and CDs dropping second. But with the streaming model increasingly under attack for undervaluing music and limiting artists' ability to cultivate fans, more acts are experimenting with alternative rollout strategies.

There shouldn't be "a one-size-fits-all strategy," says Andrew Jervis, chief curator of Bandcamp. "We're talking about art here — not widgets."

The hope is that different approaches can fire up the base and serve to reengage some listeners at a time when album releases have all the magic of a morning commute. "The consumer is not happy with the way that they are consuming music right now," says Enrique "Mag" Rodriguez, founder of EVEN, a platform that enables artists to sell music and experiences directly to fans before their albums are released to streaming platforms.

**3.5K+**

Campaigns run by EVEN, a platform that enables artists to sell their music and experiences to fans before their albums stream.

Testing alternative release strategies may also let musicians generate more money from their biggest followers. "If you permanently emphasize pointing your friends somewhere where they can simply listen to whatever they want, whenever they want, for this rental fee, it's kind of hard to convince them to come back and open their wallet," Jervis says.

As former Spotify chief economist Will Page and entertainment lawyer/entrepreneur Fred Goldring wrote in a recent *Billboard* op-ed, "For a [streaming platform] to provide a record label the same amount of value from an album as a vinyl buyer, a customer would need to press play over 5,000 times — or stream for almost two weeks straight without sleep," a virtual impossibility. "Consumers are paying more for the same with vinyl," they continued, "but paying less to access more with streaming."

Notably, many alternative rollout ideas echo debates from roughly a decade ago, when the streaming model was starting to take hold. Rodriguez points to Nipsey Hussle, who famously sold 1,000 copies of his 2013 release, *Crenshaw*, for $100 apiece while also making the project available for free on various mixtape sites. The rapper said at the time that he was "focused on fully serving the [fans] that have connected already."

Around the same time, multiple stars like Adele kept albums off streaming platforms for a time — *25*, released in November 2015, wasn't available on Spotify until seven months later, which helped ensure a massive first week of sales. (Adele said then that new releases "should be an event" and called the streaming model "a bit disposable.")

Some artists debuted albums exclusively on Apple Music or TIDAL before their wide release or made them available only for premium subscribers.

These initial "windowing" strategies largely went out of fashion in the mainstream industry because major labels and prominent indies often want streams and physical sales to hit the same week, so they can maximize the first-week numbers that are used to judge success. Over 600 million people around the world now listen to music on Spotify every month, and artists looking for global scale are unlikely to turn their backs on that potential audience. Plus, they are wary of offending the streaming platforms by withholding releases.

Smaller artists and record companies are making different calculations, however. At their level, earning even just a few hundred extra CD or vinyl sales by temporarily withholding an album from streaming can provide a nice revenue boost. Last year, the duo KNOWER released *Knower Forever* exclusively on Bandcamp. "They were pretty forthright about, 'We need to make some money. You can come and support us by buying this record,' " Jervis says. And that's what fans did: They purchased "something like $85,000 worth of vinyl and some similar amount in digital." The album didn't appear on Spotify until several months later.

On Bandcamp, 70% of purchases are new music, according to Jervis. One of the top 25 labels is International Anthem, the jazz label co-founded by Scott McNiece, who tells *Billboard* that, for about six months, the company has experimented with putting out physical releases and digital downloads a month before uploading albums to streaming platforms. "We want to be serving people who care enough about that particular album or artist to directly purchase the music," he says.

International Anthem hasn't "received any pushback yet from streaming services," McNiece says. And indie record store owners are thrilled. "Especially with the dwindling media market for music, having people care about your music on the ground level at independent record stores is one of the main ways to get the word out," he explains. "We've gotten an enormous amount of positive feedback" from record store owners who are excited to have an exclusive release to tout to customers.

Both McGuire and McNiece contend that offering physical releases first will not cannibalize the streaming audience because fans who buy the record will probably stream it at some point. There's another advantage as well: "When all the different formats were released on the same day, our energy was split with our messaging," McNiece says. With windowing, "We're able to focus more energy on driving traffic to those streaming platforms." In other words, a later streaming date provides a second marketing opportunity.

Rodriguez agrees that selling directly to fans before the streaming drop is additive. "As fans purchase, they are more likely to share on social media, boosting artist algorithms," he says, and "visibility on streaming platforms."

EVEN, which raised over $2 million in 2023, has run more than 3,500 campaigns for artists. Rodriguez likens the platform to traditional movie theaters and streaming services to Netflix. "Most campaigns go live on EVEN 14-plus days before their wide release," he says. "The average album sells for $25 and the average single sells for $9. It's all done in a pay-what-you-want model, with a minimum preset by the artist." He adds, "We aren't taking away from the traditional models that exist. No one is squeezing the lemon in this way." b

CREDITS HERE AND HERE TKTKTKTKTKTK

ascap

PROUD

ASCAP celebrates our LGBTQIA+ community this month and every month.

**Universal Music Group** formed a new Global Impact Team and tapped **Susan Mazo** to lead it as executive vp/chief impact officer.

**BMG** named **Jon Loba** president of frontline recordings, the Americas, adding several territories under his remit.

From The Desk Of...

# Willie "Prophet" Stiggers

## CO-FOUNDER/PRESIDENT/CEO, BLACK MUSIC ACTION COALITION

BY TAYLOR MIMS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY DIWANG VALDEZ

Stiggers photographed May 24 in Atlanta.

WHEN THE Black Music Action Coalition (BMAC) releases its annual Music Industry Action Report Card, co-founder and president/CEO Willie "Prophet" Stiggers says a barrage of distressed phone calls from executives inevitably follows. The assessments grade music companies on how well they've kept promises made in 2020 to diversify their executive ranks, among other measures; the executives call, he explains, to complain that the grades affect their bottom lines.

"That's what we want to do," says Stiggers, who is also the CEO of artist and brand management company 50/50 Music Group Management. "You can't continue to operate with false promises after saying that you stand in solidarity with your Black brothers and sisters and then don't promote the Black executive and don't ensure that a woman is in an environment where she is protected and her vision is executed."

BMAC was established in June 2020 following the movement #TheShowMustBePaused to advance racial diversity, equity and inclusion in the music business. But this year's mass industry layoffs, which included many DEI executives, has "unrolled some of the progress we were making," Stiggers says.

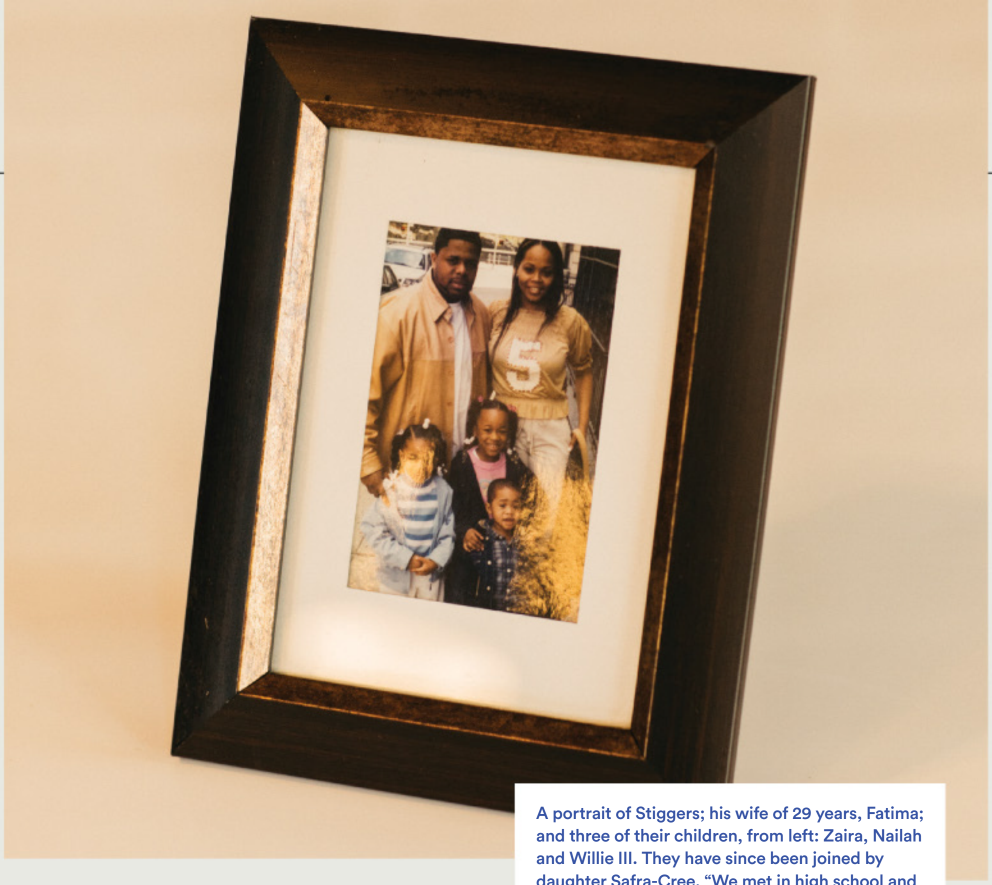
As a result, BMAC will present a new version of its report before its fourth annual gala in September. The organization has sent a link to executives that asks them to anonymously indicate whether they have seen true change, what has worsened and what still needs to be addressed.

The early results, Stiggers says, are "almost a slap in the face — a 'whitelash,' if you will, to the commitments that were made in 2020. The question has become, Was this shit really performative or not?"

**Why are there fewer Black executives in the music industry now than in 2019?**
The major labels, I'm sure, would tell you AI [artificial intelligence]. The uncertainty of that realm has caused them to tighten up. But my suspicions are, there's a bit of that, but these positions [for Black and women executives] were not permanent. A lot of the people were put in these positions in 2020 — managers became senior-level directors, for example — and then in 2024, they have been asked to go back to that lower position or exit altogether. When you have the RIAA report record-breaking revenue that the industry generated in 2023, it's a little lost on me how that translates to the lack of employment.

**What are your thoughts on the DEI positions that have been eliminated since 2020?**
The reality is that a lot of these commitments from the labels were three-year commitments. That seemed to be the hot number where they thought maybe at the end of the three years this shit would go away or we would be on to something else. Seemingly, the contracts that these DEI executives had were three-year deals. Once they were up, [the labels were] like, "We did that. We checked the box. Now let's go back to business as usual." There was so much potential for us to set this thing on the right course. So for us to go backward is really embarrassing, and history is going to reflect this.

**How are you counseling these companies to elevate people of color and women?**
A lot of our conversations with these labels, we do confidentially. Here's what I can say about it. We bring all kinds of stats to prove how profitable diversity is; how profitable it is when you let women lead; how profitable historically it has been when people of color — those



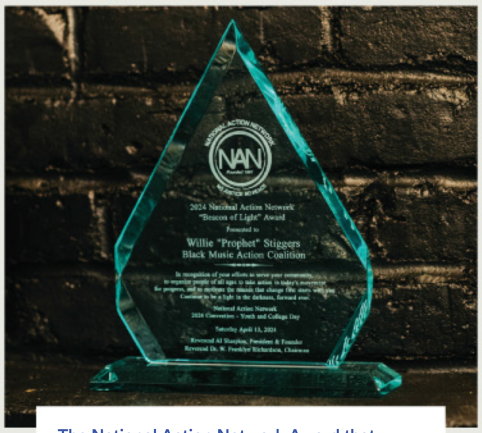
A portrait of Stiggers; his wife of 29 years, Fatima; and three of their children, from left: Zaira, Nailah and Willie III. They have since been joined by daughter Safra-Cree. "We met in high school and started [our] family young, which defined my greater purpose," he says.

**CAA** promoted **Emma Banks**, **Darryl Eaton** and **Rick Roskin** to co-heads of the agency's global touring division.

**Lee Anderson** was promoted to president of **Wasserman Music**.

The prototype of the first BMAC Award, which was given in September 2021 to The Weeknd at the first gala. "He said, 'This is the greatest award I ever received.' "

A plaque commemorating the first Music Business Accelerator Program created by BMAC in partnership with the RIAA that started at Tennessee State University in 2021.




The National Action Network Award that Stiggers received this year — "a 360 moment for me because my activism began with [NAN founder and president] Al Sharpton. I created and led [the organization's] youth division."

who make the product, who consume the product — lead [in terms of] how that product is distributed. This is not even a moral conversation at this point. I'm telling you how it impacts your bottom line.

**What do you think of the Recording Academy's attempts to diversify the voting membership for the Grammy Awards?**
Racism is a 450-year-old issue. It is not going to be solved in three or four years. What we can do is talk about the progress that has been made. We have, for the first time, a Black CEO of the Recording Academy. That's progress. We watched new categories get introduced [like] best song for social change. That didn't exist prior to Harvey Mason Jr. as CEO. He's up against decades of systems that we are slowly chipping away at. The mere fact that there is a Black Music Collective. The fact that Jay-Z stood on the stage and held a Grammy named after Dr. Dre. We're not going to act like that is the liberation of our people, but we're not going to act like that's not change.

**You say BMAC has moved from protest to policy. How?**
In 2022, it came to our attention that there were over 500 cases of Black men that were locked up for lyrics. That became a problem for us. So BMAC created the federal legislation called the RAP Act. The work that we did on that federal level created all these statewide bills like what Gov. [Gavin] Newsom signed in California last year. That was a direct result of our work. We are working with the group around Fix the Tix and are working with the groups around AI protection. Our work around legislative policy is as loud, as real and as meaningful as the work we're doing with pipeline programs.

**What are some of those pipeline programs?**
Three years ago, we partnered with the RIAA and Tennessee State University and [Nashville Music Equity's] Brian Sexton, who is an alumnus there, to bring a unique commercial business school to young people who want to get into the industry. We bring in executives and artists from all over the industry. They get paid internships that come out of that every year. We've had several people get gainfully employed at record labels and music studios. Most recently, Live Nation hired one of the participants. Tri Star [Sports & Entertainment] hired a young woman from this year's classes.

**That's not your only Nashville-related initiative.**
BMAC also put out a report in 2022 called Three Chords and the Actual Truth: The Manufactured Myth of Country Music and White America. When we released that report, there was a call to action for the music world to join us in addressing the structural racism on Music Row in Nashville and creating access. We were inspired by a guy named Michael Tubbs from Stockton, Calif. He created Mayors for a Guaranteed Income and got mayors from all over the country to create these pilot programs where they would give [citizens of their city] guaranteed income of up to $2,000 a month. He got the qualitative and quantitative data needed to show the positive effects of small increments of money going to people directly.

We felt we could bring the same concept to the music industry and creators. The Academy of Country Music was the first to raise their hand and join us. A year to the date of that report, 20 young Black kids [in the music community] started receiving $1,000 a month, plus mentorship and [other] services.

**BMAC is also working with the live industry.**
We did a partnership with Live Nation and created BMAC Live, a 10-day intensive program in California as part of Live Nation's School of Live. They allowed BMAC to come in and carve out a program specifically geared toward young Black noncollege-bound students who have a desire to be in the live space. We've had 3,000 applicants already, and we are going to pick 20 of the best of that group and fly them out to Los Angeles for a full week. Each of those young people will go to their respective cities and receive a paid internship from Live Nation for six months. [Then] they will be eligible for the Live Nation apprenticeship program. That's another six months that will then lead to employment. That's the type of access and training we talked about, and that program will scale and grow annually.

**Is there anything else you would like to highlight?**
We're working on something really special with Apple Pathways. [We are training young people] around spatial audio, spatial visual and preparing them for the technology of tomorrow. This is where we are going, and if we don't create the accessibility to the technology, another divide is about to happen. Another shift will take place in which Black America is left out once again.

**Is BMAC looking to expand its staff as these programs and initiatives develop?**
Yes. We will be expanding and looking at college representatives. Young people are ready. They're not moving with the same barriers and the same willingness to allow norms to continue to separate people. It's a different spirit among this generation here.

One thing we realized is that this fight for justice isn't just here in the U.S. We are in partnerships with organizations in the United Kingdom and Australia, and we are forging a tremendous movement with several key organizations throughout the continent [of Africa]. I'm very concerned about what's happening with Afrobeats. If we don't get over there and start working with our African brothers and sisters to understand the industry, the cultural appropriation that took place in hip-hop, blues, rock, country will happen over there. If we do not protect the [intellectual property], it will be cultural colonization all over again. b

Congratulations,
**Alice Simmons**,
on your inclusion
in this year's Pride List.
Concord is incredibly
thankful for everything
you do to Elevate Voices
large and small.

Bird photographed June 6 in London.

# High-Flying Bird

Towa Bird's debut album proves she never needed permission to be the artist she has become

BY LYNDSEY HAVENS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY NICOLE NODLAND

ON A RECENT TRIP back to London, rising pop-rock artist Towa Bird visited the house she lived in during university — it's where she started producing, writing songs and posting videos online — and felt a rare moment of pride upon returning there. "Standing back in that house, it sort of hit me: 'I have come a long way,' " says Bird, 25. "Even though I don't necessarily let myself believe that, I have."

Bird's career has been growing gradually since 2021, when she scored a major-label deal with Interscope and moved from London to Los Angeles. She gained recognition as the towering guitarist who could shred in Olivia Rodrigo's 2022 Disney+ special, *driving home 2 u*. In 2023, she scored an opening slot on Reneé Rapp's Snow Hard Feelings Tour and, in October, released breakout single "Drain Me!," an electrifying alternative-rock hit about lust that appears on her debut album, *American Hero*, out June 28.

Growing up in Hong Kong and later London, the half-Filipino, half-English artist was raised on alternative and classic rock, identifying most with guitarists (her idols include Jimi Hendrix and Prince). "Hearing the way that guitarists would manipulate the instrument, making it sound just as strong and present as the lead vocal, I was attracted to that," Bird says. By 12, she was learning how to play on her father's old guitar, "which I think had like three strings on it," she recalls. "But I definitely tried to make it functional."

Two years later, Bird formed her first band, The Glass Onions, and started performing at local Hong Kong dives. Yet, despite her early strides, Bird assures she wanted to be everything *but* a full-time artist — namely because she never felt empowered or allowed to be one at all. "I don't think anyone in my family thought that [this] would be the case — including myself," she says. "I thought it'd be a cute hobby."

She went on to attend Goldsmiths, University of London, but dropped out in 2020 just before the pandemic. Shortly after to pass the time, Bird started uploading videos of herself shredding over other artists' songs on TikTok and soon "fell into" writing, producing and playing guitar for more emerging acts. Never feeling like she had "permission" — mostly from herself — to be an artist, Bird preferred working outside of the limelight. But what she didn't expect was that through those sessions — many of which were done on Zoom late at night in London with artists in L.A. — she felt the authority she had always sought. "Just being in the scene and being seen was good," she says.

Around the same time, Bird met music managers Jacob Epstein and Zack Morgenroth (of Lighthouse Management, whose clients include Rodrigo) "through the internet," as she says, and signed with the pair. She figured a publishing deal would follow, but despite being "too scared to sing," Epstein and Morgenroth were simultaneously setting up label meetings for Bird as an artist. The interest she received piqued her own, saying the encouragement and support from major labels "gave me a little kick up the ass" to focus on her own music. In 2021, she signed an artist deal with Interscope and moved to L.A.

Bird has since emerged as an urgent voice in rock music, whether through her singing or shredding. And most often, it's both. She believes that in the last few years, there has been a groundswell of interest in live instruments again, especially among her generation. She credits the resurgence in part to her pal Rodrigo. "Olivia really opened doors for me," Bird says, referring to the Disney+ special that earned her early praise and press. "It was really cool of her to see a young female artist and be like, 'I want to highlight you.' "

Last year, Bird had another peer (and labelmate) give her a boost when Rapp enlisted her to play guitar on "Tummy Hurts," off Rapp's debut album, *Snow Angel*. She then brought Bird on her 2023 tour, which allowed the singer-guitarist to meet her fans in person for the first time — and to spend time with singer-songwriter-producer Alexander 23, a fellow Rapp tourmate and friend of Bird's whom she worked with on *American Hero*.

Across the album's 13 tracks, Bird reflects on a range of relatable 20-something woes: raging over how expensive life is and the lacking U.S. health care system on "B.I.L.L.S."; adjusting to life in L.A. and a career in music on "This Isn't Me"; and feeling fearful about falling in love with a friend on "Sorry Sorry."

"I was never like, 'Oh, I'm going to write a gay song today,' " she says of her approach to writing. "It was just like, 'I want to write a good song about love or sex,' or whatever I was feeling. It's funny how [my music has] been labeled as queer music or whatever people decide to label it as, but for me, I think it's just good music — maybe."

True to form, Bird struggles to celebrate the victories she has had so far. She can't even say the word "success" without using air quotes. She insists she's trying to get better at acknowledging her wins along the way — which now include a slate of summer festival gigs — and already has an idea of how to celebrate her album's release. "I'll sit and listen to the full thing, front to back. And then probably cry and get aggressively drunk," she says with a laugh.

But in spite of feeling "shit scared" about its release, Bird recognizes its importance. While she never felt like she had permission to land exactly where she has, with *American Hero*, she gives that runway to anyone who listens. "It's something that I clearly still continue to lack," Bird says. "I mean, what young woman will tell you that that [support is] something they received growing up? Probably none. Especially in this industry. So if I can help in any sort of way, even inadvertently, then that's great." ◼

Q&A

## Tayla "To The Max"

GRAMMY AWARD-NOMINATED singer-songwriter Tayla Parx has always been country. Hailing from Dallas, the 30-year-old multihyphenate became just the fourth Black woman in history to write a Country Airplay No. 1 with Dan + Shay's "Glad You Exist" (2021), and a few months ago, Parx moved to Nashville. There, she has been developing a sustainable ranch while prepping her forthcoming third album, *Many Moons, Many Suns* (out on her TaylaMade Records), which explores the unexpected end of her engagement and combines country, rock, house, soul and contemporary pop. "I'm buying goats, sheep and cows," she says of her new home. "I'm already excited about the songs that I'll create just being here."

**What was a key moment on the journey to your new album?**

Being able to take four years, I finally was like, "I feel new again." [We] go through these feelings of breaking down and building up and breaking down your new version of yourself ... I'm in that moment now. [That's] when it's the right time for me to create, or finish, the album.

**Last year, you co-wrote on Troye Sivan's "Got Me Started" and Janelle Monáe's "Water Slide." Did you carry any inspiration from those sessions into your own?**

We have a problem in the songwriting world where you'll see a queer artist and they have only straight writers on the project, and that's a bit weird. Or we see a woman artist and they only have straight men as writers, and that's also a bit weird. I'm not saying we can't have that perspective, because I've written for a lot of different people and I haven't experienced their version of life. However, it's always important to have at least somebody be a part of the project that can see you in a very different way — and maybe be that's because they're queer. So I've been choosing to write with a lot of artists [with whom] I can write from that perspective. I've been a lot more selective these days.

**"Era" has heavy ballroom energy, as does "10s." How did examining your relationship affect your influences while recording?**

We have that ballroom energy, New Orleans energy, all the things that I've experienced in my life that are such a huge part of queer culture. With "10s," I played a lot with pulling from my community, the different sounds that inspire us and make us move. I really wanted to go to the extreme. A lot of the music that is the most groundbreaking is ballroom. We've been forced to be out of the boundary, or seen as that, for so long that it was like, "Fuck it. Well, I might as well be the best version of me — and do me to the max." —KYLE DENIS

TAYLA PARX: JUSTIN AYERS

PROUDLY CELEBRATING YOU

ADAM ROTH

Congratulations on being named a **Pride Mover & Shaker.** We honor your inspiring leadership and dedication to fostering inclusivity in the music community.

RECORDING ACADEMY®

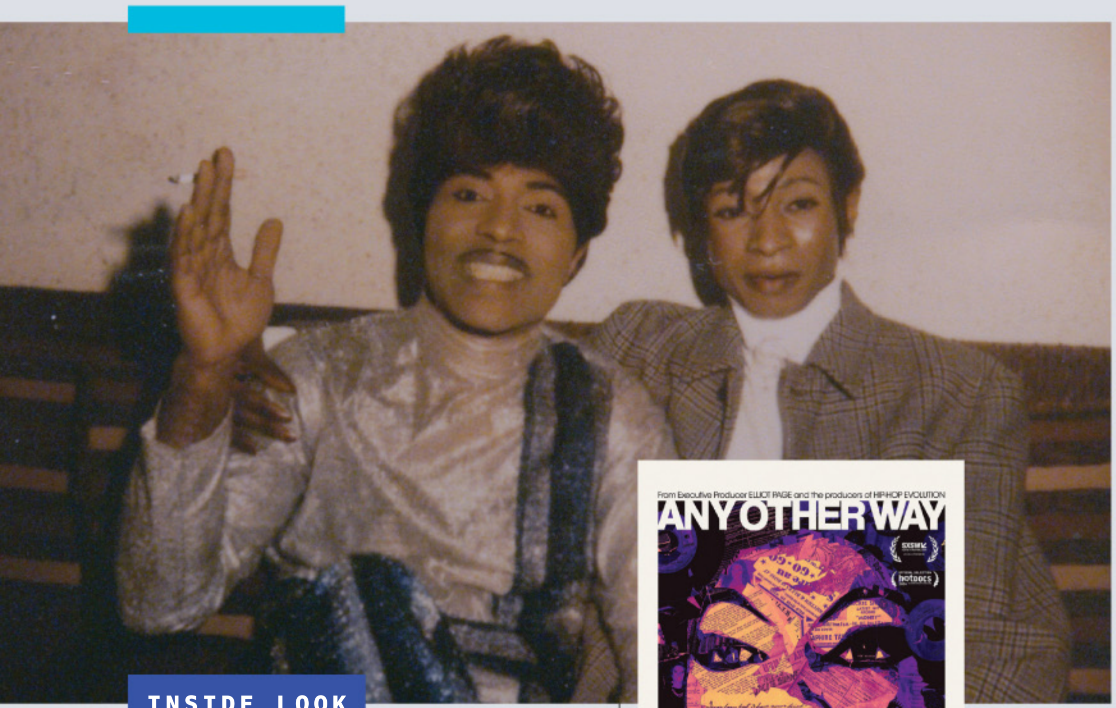
**Congratulations**

**to our superstar COO and co-President Anna Neville on her inclusion in Billboard's Annual Pride Power list**

We're incredibly lucky to have you as part of our global team, someone who works tirelessly for staff and clients alike.

Thank you for everything ♥

TAP MUSIC



Above: Shane (right) with Little Richard in Nashville. Inset: a poster for the singer's documentary.

INSIDE LOOK

# AT LONG LAST

Trans soul singer Jackie Shane disappeared in 1971 — a new film reclaims her legacy

BY ROB LEDONNE

**FOR A BRIEF SHINING** moment in the 1960s, Black trans soul singer Jackie Shane seemed to be turning into a star. That is, until she inexplicably vanished.

"This is a woman who disappeared off the face of the earth for 45 years and nobody knew if she was alive or dead," says Michael Mabbott, co-director of the forthcoming documentary *Any Other Way: The Jackie Shane Story*. "As a filmmaker, that's an intriguing thing in itself."

The simultaneously sad and triumphant tale of a groundbreaker before her time is the crux of the film. Co-directed by Mabbott along with Lucah Rosenberg-Lee and co-produced by Elliot Page, it brushes away the dust and traces Shane's stunning rise as a trans singer during an inhospitable period. The result of her quest is a long-overdue reclamation of Shane's musical legacy. "This theme of erasure was such a guiding light for working on this project," says Rosenberg-Lee, who is Black and trans himself. "I recognize how much of our history is lost."

Shane, a native of the American South before moving to Toronto to escape the suffocating effects of Jim Crow, subsequently made waves with a song that inspired the film's name, the breezy horn- and drum-fueled "Any Other Way." Along with landing on *Billboard*'s Bubbling Under Hot 100 chart, it became a hit in Canada in 1962. And yet, despite Shane's fleeting fame, Mabbott hadn't heard of the performer until about a decade ago when he came across a bootleg of *Jackie Shane Live!* When he discovered she had been missing since 1971, his interest was further piqued.

"It was staggering that she was from my hometown [of Toronto] and I didn't know who she was," Mabbott says. After Numero Group reissued her music in 2017 (a compilation of her career later won a Grammy Award for best historical album), it was revealed she was indeed still alive. From there, Mabbott attempted to get in touch — to no avail — before discovering she was living as a recluse in Nashville. Shane eschewed the music industry for myriad reasons, from caring for the woman she regarded as her mother to avoiding the discrimination that had plagued her career from the start.

"Our first phone call lasted four hours," says Mabbott, who recalls how Shane had an endless supply of vivid memories from her too-brief career — and was ready for a second chapter. "We spoke every week for over a year," helping the two form a close bond. "She eventually said, 'Let's work on this documentary.' "

Unfortunately, as plans were coalescing, Shane died in her sleep in February 2019. "Her death was all the more tragic because she was ready to come back," Mabbott says. "She felt the timing of this was important to her and that her message had to be heard now more than ever."

With that, the filmmakers tackled her journey with added vigor to piece together the puzzle of a remarkable life. Luckily, Shane had scrupulously preserved the artifacts of her career, from acetate recordings to homemade jewelry. Mabbott, who worked with Shane's long-lost family and a music anthropologist to excavate her legacy, calls the treasure trove she left behind "a documentarian's dream."

The final product, which premiered at South by Southwest in March, tells a story the filmmakers hope will spur audiences to both reflect and feel inspired. As Rosenberg-Lee explains, "To have people watch the movie, feel connected to it and see that, 'Wow, people like this have been around for a long time doing their thing...' It's very gratifying for sure."

ONE TO WATCH

## Nemo

**FROM** Biel, Switzerland

**AGE** 24

**LABEL** UMG Germany/Switzerland

**FOUNDATION** Nemo's career started from a place of sheer curiosity. At age 9, the singer found a flyer in their hometown advertising open auditions for a youth opera and joined. After one performance of Mozart's *The Magic Flute*, they came to a stunning realization: "I love being on a stage." Nemo went on to perform in a number of operas and even landed a role in a musical in Zurich, all of which helped hone their vocal skills and educate them on writing lyrics. In 2015, they self-released *Clownfisch*, an EP of songs written in Swiss German. But soon after its release, Nemo realized that writing and performing songs in their native dialect could only get them so far. "Swiss German is great, but it is also a tiny language," they say. "If I wanted to open my playing field and collaborate with more people, I needed to start writing in English."

**DISCOVERY** After a decade spent jumping between boutique indie labels, Nemo decided to submit a song to Eurovision 2024 — but knew they needed someone "to direct that water." They reached out to multiple major labels and found what they were looking for at Universal Music Group. Soon after, Nemo submitted their original song "The Code," which fittingly interpolates *The Magic Flute*. The frenetic, operatic track earned Eurovision's top prize by 44 points over the favorite to win, Croatia's Baby Lasagna. In taking home the trophy, Nemo became the first nonbinary performer to win Eurovision — and has since watched "The Code" become their first charting hit, climbing to Nos. 21 and 52 on the Billboard Global Excl. U.S. and Billboard Global 200 charts, respectively. "Jumping into the cold water that is Eurovision meant learning how to swim while everyone was watching," they say.

**FUTURE** With so much momentum, Nemo is resolute in making the most of their moment. Following the "very time-consuming" process of curating their Eurovision performance, Nemo has now been spending a significant amount of time in the studio. "The last couple of days, I've worked with some amazing writers and producers, and we have so many songs that I want to share," they say, beaming. "A lot of exciting things are finally happening." —STEPHEN DAW

SHANE: COURTESY OF BANGER FILMS AND THE NFB. NEMO: MARTIN SYLVEST ANDERSEN/GETTY IMAGES.

billboard
LATIN
NEWSLETTERS
GET EXPERT INSIGHT ON THE LATIN MUSIC AND ENTERTAINMENT SECTORS — STRAIGHT TO YOUR INBOX
SIGN UP AT
BILLBOARD.COM/NEWSLETTERS

Budde Music wishes
Bon Anniversaire
to
75
Years of Songs
TRO Essex
Music Group
BuddeMusic

CONGRATULATIONS TO
TRO ESSEX MUSIC GROUP
ON 75 YEARS OF MUSIC PUBLISHING!
We're proud to be part of your story.
CMRRA
SX WORKS
GLOBAL PUBLISHER SERVICES
75 YEARS OF SONGS
TRO ESSEX MUSIC GROUP

# $IGN OF

Ty Dolla $ign photographed May 16 in Los Angeles.

**Styling by Michael Comrie**
Opposite page: 3 Man jacket, Gabriela Coll shirt, OTW by Vans shoes, Gentle Monster eyewear. This page: Enfants Riches Déprimés pants, Gentle Monster eyewear.

# THE TIMES

The Kendrick Lamar track that capped a historic beef and the No. 1 Ye album no one expected have something crucial in common: connections to **Ty Dolla $ign**, the musical polymath who has changed the sound of modern R&B and hip-hop

BY DAMIEN SCOTT

PHOTOGRAPHED BY SAGE EAST

**YOU WON'T SEE TY DOLLA $IGN'S** name in the production credits for Kendrick Lamar's "Not Like Us." But without him, the song that this spring put an exclamation point on Lamar's long-simmering beef with Drake — a jovial but menacing track primarily produced by Mustard, built around a pulsating set of strings — might very well not exist.

Long before Mustard became the top purveyor of Cali bounce, he was a friend and student of Ty's. They both rolled with a crew called Pu$haz Ink that included artists across disciplines — rappers, singers, graffiti artists, producers and even a few gangsters for good measure. As part of the group's in-house production squad, Ty would host the crew at his home while he cooked up beats for them. And while he toiled away, the young DJ Mustard steadily documented everything he saw, clocking Ty's every move to see just how the magic was made. One night, the crew was having a party at a house in Los Angeles' Baldwin Hills neighborhood when Mustard played the song "Scotty" by Atlanta snap group D4L; Ty still remembers how everyone went crazy and started dancing. He was blown away by the beat's simplicity, which reminded him of the jerk music then growing in popularity in California.

The next morning, still inspired, Ty started making some new beats. One of his production partners, Chordz, gave him a record to sample that Ty slowed down and pitched perfectly to accentuate the 808s, hi-hat, a snare and a piano sound. The beat became "Toot It & Boot It," the 2010 debut single for Ty's Pu$haz Ink peer, the rapper YG — and Ty's first hit record. But, more importantly, the beat laid the foundation for what became the de facto sound of the West Coast for the next decade, one that Mustard perfected and made his own.

"Mustard [was] always in my ear like, 'Yo, you got to stop, the shit is done, the shit is done, stop adding all that shit,' " Ty remembers today. "I guess it was irritating him so bad that he was like, 'I'm finna do my own beats. Give me some sounds,' " he adds with a laugh. So he did. "The same sounds he's using, I gave him years ago."

Ty's easygoing nature can mask his intense work ethic and deep musical knowledge. But that combination has helped him endure and soar in this industry for more than a decade. In addition to a solo career that has redefined the sound of R&B, he has worked with an astounding number of artists across genres, from 21 Savage to Fifth Harmony to Charli XCX to Post Malone.

"To me, he is someone who is such an ambidextrous player," says Julie Greenwald, chair/CEO of Atlantic Music Group, where Ty is signed to Atlantic Records. "You could put him in any room, any studio environment, and the guy will always rise to the occasion of making great music. He's so comfortable in his own skin and with what kind of contributor he is. Ty is that guy who makes great music on his own and makes great music with whoever you put him with."

That comfort is why Ty didn't think twice about helping Mustard find his sound. "Mustard brought it to a whole 'nother level," he says today over Zoom from his house in L.A. At 42, Ty still looks like the baby-faced crooner who first appeared back in 2010. His hair is longer, of course, and he's a bit heftier, but he still loves blowing trees. As he's talking, he preps a pile of spliffs to take with him as he runs errands; you get the feeling that Ty's checklist before leaving the crib is, "Keys, phone, wallet, spliff." "I tell people when it comes to music, people have already played every single line — there's just different ways you can do it," he says. "Mustard just brought it to a whole 'nother level. I'm super proud of what he's doing, and we're just setting it up for the next generation."

These days, the artist born Tyrone William Griffin Jr. has a lot to be proud of. It has taken him a while, but 20 years after starting his first musical group, the R&B duo Ty & Kory, Ty has finally attained the one accolade that had thus far eluded him: a No. 1 as lead artist on the Billboard Hot 100. Earlier this year, his collaborative album with Ye, *Vultures 1*, topped the Billboard 200, and one of its songs, the uproarious "Carnival," rose to the Hot 100's top spot. It was a feat many believed wouldn't or couldn't happen — not because either artist lacked the ability to make a No. 1 album or single today (before 2024, Ye already had 10 Billboard 200 No. 1s and four Hot 100 chart-toppers to his name), but because, well, no one really understood why or how the project was happening in the first place.

By 2022, Ye (the artist formerly known as Kanye West) had ostracized himself from nearly every industry of the many he had participated in, following a ceaseless series of offensive remarks and actions, both in person and on social media. He lost his lucrative sneaker deal with adidas after he made inappropriate sexual comments to employees and following a series of antisemitic remarks he made publicly. He lost his longtime deal with Def Jam Records and Universal Music Group, and high fashion brands like Balenciaga, which Ye once helped find success in the hip-hop world, cut ties with him. The usual Ye redemption cycle — which has historically involved him doing something public and widely considered offensive, then releasing a remarkable piece of art that makes much of the public all but forget the offense — would not work this time. Despite making a public apology on Instagram for his harmful antisemitic comments, it seemed as if Ye had finally crossed the Rubicon and become radioactive.

> **"HE'S SO COMFORTABLE IN HIS OWN SKIN AND WITH WHAT KIND OF CONTRIBUTOR HE IS. TY IS THAT GUY WHO MAKES GREAT MUSIC ON HIS OWN AND MAKES GREAT MUSIC WITH WHOEVER YOU PUT HIM WITH."**
>
> —JULIE GREENWALD, ATLANTIC

So when news broke last fall that Ye and Ty were dropping an album together, many fans were perplexed. But the pair's alignment made sense in multiple ways. The two had worked together many times before: Ty wrote and lent vocals to songs on 2016's *The Life of Pablo* ("Real Friends" and "Fade") and produced and sang on its 2018 follow-up, *Ye*. Historically, Ye has relied on someone else to help him bring a project across the finish line — Rick Rubin famously helped him assemble what became *Yeezus* in 2013, and most recently, Mike Dean has been his go-to homestretch guy. On *Big Boy's Neighborhood*, a popular L.A.-based radio morning show, Ye explained why Ty was that essential player for *Vultures 1*. "Mike Dean was the kind of person that you can hand him something and he'll hand you a finished product back. That's how Ty is," he said. "You can give him something, even a murmur, and he'll bring it back with the words, he can fix all the notes on it, he can bring in the drums, the music." Today, Ty agrees with his collaborator's assessment. "I remember Thundercat's dad [drummer Ron Bruner Sr.] telling me one time that he used to teach his son to be a master of one thing instead of trying to do all the things," he says. "But what I feel like I was the master at was completing songs — whatever [their] fucking genre."

As for the why of *Vultures 1* — why Ty, a low-key, affable guy who seemingly gets along with everyone, would align himself with someone as caustic as Ye — as Ty sees it, the answer is pretty simple.

"Ye is the best artist of this generation, besides me, and I don't give a fuck about what people were talking about. I know my n—. He's one of the best people I've ever met," he says. Ty also shrugs off the notion that he might have feared the album would perform poorly because everyone else thought Ye's musical career was over. "Just with my analysis of how it goes with him, he goes all the way to the top. And something may happen and he'll say [something people find offensive] — and then people [get] right back, you know. Because this shit is undeniable."

**THE "HOW" OF *VULTURES 1*** is a bit more complicated.

Coming off his 2023 single "Motion," a Chris Brown-featuring track heavily inspired by South African *amapiano* music, Ty wanted his next album to reflect the sounds he has loved while traveling. When Ty ran into Ye at a club in Tokyo in the spring of 2023, he was just starting work on the project, and he asked Ye to executive-produce. Ye agreed, and the two started working on music together the very next day. Ye's involvement moved the music away from the Black diasporic and house and club influences that Ty was experimenting with — and marked the genesis of *Vultures 1*.

Ty already had a bunch of songs in the can that he says he started right where we're sitting a few weeks before our Zoom, in his studio in downtown Hollywood. He has had this space for just about a year, and a remodeling is ongoing; the only signs that a major hit-maker owns the spot are the vintage cars parked in the back in various states of restoration and the collection of rare synths and keyboards usually housed in the main studio.

Despite its current appearance, this is where Ty feels most at home creating. The freedom he has here led to the experimentation that yielded "Burn" — probably the warmest, most soulful track on *Vultures 1*. "The 'Burn' that I brought [Ye] was a completely different song. It had a whole different beat. A whole different direction," Ty remembers. "He took it, loved it, stripped it down, redid the beat, and we got 'Burn' — and it's the second-biggest streaming song on *Vultures*."

That's pretty much how the entire album went: Ty would bring Ye a track, and the two would then deconstruct it and build it back up — a laborious, time-intensive undertaking, especially amid the globe-trotting the two did while making the project. Largely at Ye's behest, *Vultures 1* was recorded in Las Vegas, Miami, Los Angeles, Japan, Italy, Saudi Arabia and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. In trademark Ye fashion — he famously recorded *Watch the Throne* with Jay-Z between European castles and the Mercer hotel in New York — the duo

SET DESIGN BY PETER GUERACAGUE. GROOMING BY TY MOSBY. BARBERING BY JC THABARBER.

set up in wildly varying locales at each stop.

"Japan was hotel rooms, Italy was hotel rooms. Then we got Sting to let us use his [Italian] villa," Ty says. "At first we were just recording in the living room, recording by the pool, setting up recording equipment out there, and then we found out that there's an actual recording studio there," he adds with a laugh. In Dubai, Ye and Ty took over an empty building in a hotel complex and built a bunch of makeshift studios throughout it. That's where they made "Do it," the YG and Nipsey Hussle-featuring track that sounds like a baroque strip club anthem. "It's a very expensive album, I will say that," Ty admits. "It would make for a crazy documentary." (Ty has footage of some of the songs being made, but probably not enough for a movie, he allows.)

The Ye and Ty world tour of sorts was, Ty says now, nothing new for him: "I've always done that. All of my songs; all of my albums — traveling everywhere, laptop, mic, speakers. I've done music that way ever since you could make music that way." But he got his start much more traditionally. Born in South Central L.A., Ty was raised in a musical home. His father, Tyrone Griffin Sr., was a session musician who played all over L.A., sitting in with acts ranging from rap royalty (2Pac and Snoop Dogg) to R&B rising stars (Immature) and the legendary funk band Lakeside (best known for the 1981 hit "Fantastic Voyage," sampled by Coolio on his track of the same name).

Griffin Sr. and Ty's mother, a real estate agent, separated when Ty was young, and he stayed with his mom while his older brother went to live with his dad — but Sr. left a lasting impression on Jr., who had started fiddling with his dad's instruments before he could talk and later amassed his own collection at his mom's place. (Today, Ty can play a multitude of instruments by ear, including the drums, keyboard and guitar.) When Ty started making beats as a 12-year-old, he would use two cassette tapes to make his own loops. Realizing that method's inefficiency, Griffin Sr. bought his son his first MPC and set him on his way.

Listening to the ambrosial blend of '90s R&B, G-Funk and rap that constitutes Ty's solo catalog today, it's easy to hear his musical DNA and the complementary influences of his funk musician dad and the gangsta rap that dominated the airwaves of his youth. Both powered Ty's fresh vision for what popular Black music could be.

In the early 2000s, Ty worked to fine-tune that vision — and the world got its first glimpse of what he had in mind with *Free TC*, his 2015 debut studio album dedicated to his incarcerated brother, Jabreal Muhammad. (The project's title references Muhammad, nicknamed Big TC, who has been serving a life sentence since 2004 for a murder he says he didn't commit.) At the time, most fans knew Ty from "Toot It & Boot It" and his *Beach House* mixtapes and EP, which birthed his first top 40 hit, "Paranoid."

Those songs were good and catchy but belied Ty's true musical dexterity, revealed more wholly on *Free TC*. Thanks to his songwriting and production résumé by that point, Ty was able to call on a stunning list of heavy-hitter guest stars for his debut — Lamar, Ye, Future, Brandy, Wiz Khalifa and Babyface, among many others. Combining classic R&B melodies and styles with modern rap energy, he melded the two worlds in a way few had successfully done before. Think Future, if he could sing traditionally well, produce *and* play instruments, and you start to scratch the surface of Ty's capabilities.

"[When we signed Ty in 2012] R&B was in kind of an uncool space. He was, like, bringing it into the future with his songwriting, with his production, with his melodies, the way he was approaching songs," recalls former Atlantic A&R executive Shawn Barron, who signed Ty to the label after hearing some of his early music. "It was just all so new. And I feel like really he's the forefather of the R&B that we hear today."

**IN PERSON, TY IS USUALLY HUMBLE.** When prodded about his influence over modern R&B, he impishly acknowledges some similarities between what he has done and the R&B currently dominating the charts. But when it comes to his love of the genre, he's unabashed.

"I love R&B. You see outside [the studio], I got my 1964 Chevy Impala on chrome spokes. When I'm in that I'm listening to old R&B — you know, love songs and that vibe that just fits the car because it's the time," he says, putting his spliff down to indicate how much he means what he says. He's just as fulsome when it comes to giving props to R&B's newer stars. "I love SZA. Chris Brown is a legend — he's like, The One. I love Bryson Tiller and what he just dropped. Brent [Faiyaz] is hard. There's so many people I can name… Coco Jones, as far as like, the new ones coming out. Yeah, she's killing it. Tyla. There's a lot of dope R&B right now."

He trails off a bit and then blurts out one more name: "Leon Thomas!" A 30-year-old, New York-raised singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist, Thomas earned a modicum of fame as a kid actor on Nickelodeon's *Victorious*. A former member of the Rascals songwriting and producing crew, Thomas went on to write and produce for Babyface, Drake and Ye. But his biggest placement came in 2022 when he co-wrote SZA's "Snooze," the song that would win him his first Grammy. And if it's up to Ty, Thomas will become a household name soon: He's the first signee to Ty's label, EZMNY Records.

> **"YE IS THE BEST ARTIST OF THIS GENERATION, BESIDES ME, AND I DON'T GIVE A FUCK WHAT PEOPLE WERE TALKING ABOUT… HE'S ONE OF THE BEST PEOPLE I'VE EVER MET."**
>
> —TY DOLLA $IGN

"When he took a liking to my music, one thing I noticed is that he always respected what I did as a live musician and never really wanted to change me into something quote unquote more palatable. He really respected who I was truly as a human being and as an artist," Thomas says. "We're doing our best to garner the best numbers we can get. But I love the fact that he's investing in someone like myself who's really focused on doing my best to make art and to stay true to being a musician."

Making the music that inspires the next generation of R&B artists is one thing; taking charge of the career of one of that generation's most promising artists is another entirely, especially for someone like Ty who has made a career out of following his own creative north star and rarely having to make tough compromises. But Barron, Ty's partner in EZMNY, believes he's actually the perfect person to lead a label. The two started EZMNY in 2022 as a place to showcase what they consider to be real music. "I just want to find the best artists on the planet," Ty explains. "To me, it's like, 'OK, popularity is one thing, all that shit that a lot of people look for, how many streams did they do? How many followers do they have?' [But] I wasn't worried about that. Because I know that's not what it takes. That's one thing to figure out. But you got to be good in order to last now."

"Ty's a great artist, and I feel like he knows certain things that it took for him to get where he needed to be on certain things that I don't even know," Barron says. "I feel like he takes those thoughts and actions [on the artist side] and he brings them over to being a label executive. And he's very artist-friendly. He's able to describe and break down things that may be confusing to some people because he has been through it already."

As he launched his own label and traveled the globe making an album with one of the most famous/infamous artists on the planet, Ty was also confronting personal news that seems to still surprise him: His 19-year-old daughter, Jailynn, aspires to follow in her father's footsteps and make music, too. "She came to me the other day, and was like, 'Dad, I want to record one record.' I'm like, 'What you want to do, rap or sing?' She's like, 'I want to sing on my art.' So she just made one song. It's hard. And she's going to keep on going." He jokes that Ye's oldest daughter, North, must have inspired Jailynn after North's fan-favorite verse on *Vultures 1*'s "Back to Me." "I'm like, 'Wow, I really never heard you sing before.' [Jailynn] really just never sung in front of me," he recalls. "And she told me she didn't want to do music. She was playing basketball."

His own solo project — the one he intended to focus on when that first fateful meeting with Ye happened in Japan — will have to wait: Now he has a trilogy to finish. Today, in his main studio room, he plays music, some of which he says is from *Vultures 2*. As Ty tells it, the album is almost done and could be released any day now. (The album art features a masked Ty holding a portrait of his incarcerated brother, Muhammad.) As with *Vultures 1*, his label may well be among the last to find out, which Greenwald says isn't a problem: "He has earned that right with us. When he calls to say, 'I made a project, it's coming out,' we always say, 'Listen, this is your name and we got you.' "

When asked about the rumors that he and Ye will circumvent streaming platforms and sell the album directly to fans, Ty replies, "Why not? Switch it up. He's always got something up his sleeve. I always got some[thing] up my sleeve." To Ty, the album's distribution comes second to the music. He'll let Ye worry about the marketing and distribution. His focus, as he works with an artist he believes has unlimited creative potential, is to get the rest of this trilogy out into the world — just like he has always done.

"We got all the songs. Basically, it's just like, 'How can we get it there? How can we go bigger than the first album?' " Ty says, clearly amped. He won't say it explicitly, but it's within reason that, as we're speaking, he's trying to piece together the puzzle that will become *Vultures 2*. After all, that's why Ye — and everyone else — loves working with Ty. He can do anything and everything. But unless the album makes fans move and adds something new to music — something that has never been attempted before — then to him, it's not done. "Certain people will probably expect you to just do the same exact sound," he says. "But that sound's already out." b

Alpinestars RSRV hoodie, pants and boots; Sucia Rata gloves; 032c for MYKITA eyewear.

TRO ESSEX MUSIC GROUP

*Congratulations on*

# 75 YEARS OF ICONIC MUSIC

WE'RE PROUD OF OUR LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIP

BMI

MUSIC MOVES OUR WORLD

2024

2024

BILLBOARD

# Pride LIST

Over the last decade, LGBTQ+ music fans have seen representation among popular artists steadily rise to new heights. At the same time, queer professionals have become more visibly integral to the music business — and have helped many of these talents achieve their massive accomplishments. Across all sectors of the industry, these 30 executives are working to create a more diverse, more equitable future for music's LGBTQ+ community.

2024

2024

EXECUTIVE OF THE YEAR

# DAVID FURNISH

Guiding Elton John through a record-setting farewell tour is just one way the former ad executive has transformed the legacy and relevance of the pop legend (who also happens to be his husband)

BY STEPHEN DAW

PHOTOGRAPHED BY JACK ALEXANDER

Furnish photographed
May 16 in London.

DAVID FURNISH felt a rush of endorphins wash over him. It was a warm June evening in 2023, and the surging crowd of over 120,000 had gathered to witness the first-ever Glastonbury Festival set — and, at least for the time being, the last public concert in the United Kingdom — by Elton John. That crush of concertgoers was screaming for Furnish's star client — who also happens to be his husband.

"Even the concession stands in the back closed down so that they could watch the show," Furnish recalls, still flabbergasted nearly a year later. "The crowd just filled in around the stands and along the entire north barrier. It was a sea of joy."

The performance would break records for the annual festival: Along with that in-person crowd, John's performance garnered 7.3 million overnight viewers on BBC One, making it the most-watched Glastonbury set in history. And if not for Furnish, it never would have happened.

"Elton and I have been talking about it for years. He would say, 'I just don't know if I'm right for Glastonbury,' " Furnish tells *Billboard* over Zoom today as John chuckles next to him at their home in Windsor, just outside of London. "I was like, 'Are you kidding me? You'll go down really, really well.' And sure enough, it was overwhelmingly wonderful on every level."

While Furnish, 61, has been a part of John's life for just over three decades — the couple began dating in 1993, entered a civil partnership in 2005 and officially tied the knot in 2014 — he has spent the last nine years working as the icon's manager, bringing his years of experience in advertising to preserving John's legacy, reestablishing him as a legendary singer and revitalizing his brand. That meant taking an aggressive approach to telling John's life story through a tell-all memoir (*Me*) and blockbuster feature film (2019's *Rocketman*), introducing his music to a younger audience through strategic partnerships and closing out his touring career with a record-setting farewell outing that was the highest-grossing trek by any artist prior to Taylor Swift's The Eras Tour.

"I cannot think of anybody in the world who would have done a better job than David has over the last nine years," John says. "This man has done the most incredible job with my career, and what's more, he has helped me enjoy it even more than I thought I could."

Born and raised in Toronto, Furnish didn't imagine a future where he would be working behind the scenes for an entertainment legend. After graduating from high school, Furnish says he originally dreamed of becoming "a musical theater-type actor." But on his family's advice, he instead pursued a business degree at the University of Western Ontario, where he graduated in 1985. Recruited out of college by storied advertising firm Ogilvy & Mather, Furnish thrived, becoming the youngest director at the company by the time he was 30.

"At the end of the day, I'm more of a creative than a businessman. That's just the dominant side of my brain," he explains. "I chose advertising because it was the most creative business I felt I could get into."

But after meeting John in 1993 at a dinner party hosted by a mutual friend (they began dating shortly thereafter), Furnish found himself in need of something a bit more flexible. Leaving advertising behind, he pursued a career in film, producing multiple movies, including 1999's *Women Talking Dirty* and 2006's *It's a Boy Girl Thing*, through John's own cinematic imprint, Rocket Pictures — where he also made his directorial debut with the singer's 1997 tell-all documentary, *Elton John: Tantrums & Tiaras*.

During that time, Furnish noticed that his husband's career needed further direction. "I was trained to understand how you start at the beginning of a journey and then figure out what steps to take with the audience to get them from point A to point B," Furnish explains. "I also knew the most important thing for Elton was keeping his songs alive and relevant for the next generation. So the rest came rather naturally."

**"Looking at this from a completely egotistical point of view, I've always been a big artist. But what David has done lifted me into the echelon of artists like The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Paul McCartney. That's how good he is."**

**—ELTON JOHN**

Taking over as the star's manager in 2015, Furnish devised a business plan to reinvigorate John's career — an approach the singer points to as a marked improvement from his past management. "Before David started managing me, our relationship with the record company [Universal Music Group] was just my former manager saying, 'Let's go in there and ask them for more money.' And that is a terrible attitude to have," John says with a laugh. "Now I have the best relationship with my record company because [David] came in with a plan to get us in better shape."

After sharing his plan with John, Furnish says he immediately sent the strategy to UMG CEO Lucian Grainge, aiming to show the label that "things were going to be different." That open line of communication led to a groundbreaking deal between Rocket Entertainment and UMG in 2018, in which the two companies signed a global partnership spanning recorded music, publishing and licensing rights for the rest of John's career.

Furnish explains that, with John's label contract set to expire in 2018, it felt right to begin renegotiations with UMG as soon as he signed on. "To do any negotiation, you want to have the most robust environment, and you want to do it at the right time," he says. "We didn't go in and say, 'Here's the new plan, so we want a new deal.' It was a simultaneous conversation, and we all walked away happy with the results."

With negotiations at UMG squared away, Furnish set his sights on bolstering John's reputation among younger audiences. The first step in that direction came with Apple Music. Meeting with co-creator Jimmy Iovine "back when it was still called Beats Music," Furnish pitched him on John as an asset for what would become *Elton John's Rocket Hour*, now one of Apple Music's longest-running

Opposite page: John (left) and Furnish onstage at the Elton John AIDS Foundation's annual Academy Awards Viewing Party in March. Above: John and Furnish with party attendees (clockwise, from left) Michaela Jaé Rodriguez, Lucien Laviscount, Andrew Watt, Charlotte Lawrence and Brandi Carlile.

programs. "We just took what Elton naturally does in his everyday life — he listens to everything — and found a passionate vehicle for it," he says. The strategy worked: Along with burnishing John's reputation among young listeners, the show has also championed vibrant new talent like Lil Nas X, Rina Sawayama and, most recently, Chappell Roan.

Another cornerstone of Furnish's plan came to fruition with the 2019 release of *Rocketman*, the award-winning musical biopic starring Taron Egerton and covering the early years of John's career. The film scored John his second Academy Award win for best original song — with longtime collaborator Bernie Taupin for "(I'm Gonna) Love Me Again" — and introduced John's catalog to an eager, younger audience.

As John puts it, "Things really started to change with the film." Its themes of "self-love, addiction, familial love and acceptance" helped make the living legend's career more accessible for less-familiar viewers, Furnish says. In the years since *Rocketman*'s release, he reports, 58% of John's streams have been generated by 18- to 35-year-olds.

With more youthful listeners hearing John's music, he and Furnish ensured that he would keep their attention with a pair of hit remixes: 2021's "Cold Heart (Pnau Remix)," featuring Dua Lipa, and 2022's "Hold Me Closer," featuring Britney Spears. The tracks returned John's music to the Billboard Hot 100 for the first time in over 20 years, with both songs putting him in the chart's top 10 for the first time since his 1997 No. 1, "Candle in the Wind 1997/Something About the Way You Look Tonight."

The active effort to bolster John's audience reflects the pair's shared interest in holding on to his legendary catalog. While other legacy artists have sold off their song collections to companies like Primary Wave or Concord, Furnish and John remain steadfast in their desire to maintain control.

"To be the custodians of that legacy that Elton and Bernie built is more important to us than anything. Elton's catalog is about as blue chip as I would want an investment to be," Furnish says. "Look at the disruption that has happened with Hipgnosis [Songs Fund]; I can't think of anything more worrying than selling your catalog to a group you liked and then suddenly, it's in the hands of somebody else. That's heartbreaking, especially after spending your life protecting it."

With their two sons, Zachary (now 13) and Elijah (11), reaching school age, John and Furnish enacted the final component of their plan: ending the singer's touring career. "It was never a question whether I wanted to stop, because I knew I needed to be with our boys. I had been on the road since I was 16, 17 years of age," John says, sighing. "Of course, I've enjoyed it all, but you have to know when to quit. And I wanted to quit at the top."

Starting in September 2018 and running through July 2023, John achieved his goal with the Farewell Yellow Brick Road tour. Across 330 shows spanning five continents, the trek grossed a whopping $939 million in ticket sales, according to Billboard Boxscore, becoming the first tour in history to surpass the $900 million mark.

That figure is a point of pride for both John and Furnish, especially considering all the work they had invested in making John's departure as spectacular as possible. "Elton put the most extraordinary foundation in place at the beginning of his career, and I got such a greater sense of appreciation for how hard he worked throughout this tour," Furnish says. "As a businessperson, I knew how to chart a path that could get him to where he deserves to be. When you put those together, it's a winning combination."

The tour also secured John a prestigious honor held by only 18 other creatives — an EGOT — thanks to an Emmy win for outstanding variety special (live) for his *Elton John Live: Farewell From Dodger Stadium* special on Disney+. "It was such an important moment for Elton professionally and for us as a family," Furnish says of the November 2022 performance, John's last in North America. "To have it honored that way, and preserved in time forever, is really beautiful."

Yet despite pulling together an unheard-of string of accolades in his husband's career, Furnish also speaks with unparalleled passion about his work as chairman for the Elton John AIDS Foundation. Throughout his conversation with *Billboard*, he regularly mentions the organization's work in Johannesburg, the southern United States and elsewhere to improve community access to standard HIV testing and treatment, reduce the stigma surrounding the spread of the virus and raise millions of dollars to help end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

It's important, Furnish points out, to translate the success of both his and John's careers into actionable, meaningful change in the world. "You need the other side of life to keep your feet on the ground, to take the gifts that you've been given and the opportunities that you've been given and help other people," he says. "We both work incredibly hard, but we also realize we're incredibly lucky. We have an obligation to give back."

With so many career-defining victories over the last decade, John says he feels privileged to share them with his companion — in no small part because their partnership is what helped make those victories happen. "The complete trust that we have in each other is a godsend," he says. "Looking at this from a completely egotistical point of view, I've always been a big artist. But what David has done lifted me into the echelon of artists like The Rolling Stones, The Beatles, Paul McCartney. That's how good he is."

Furnish quickly interrupts to correct his husband: "No — that's how good *you* are."

ONSTAGE, PARTY: MICHAEL KOVAC/GETTY IMAGES. PREVIOUS SPREAD: GROOMING BY TARA HICKMAN.

# Pride

LIST 2024

## MARY ALLEN

**Agent, UTA**

UTA was a 2023 recipient of the Equality 100 Award, marking its perfect score on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's Corporate Equality Index, a national evaluation of corporate policies, practices and benefits related to LGBTQ+ employees. (Only 595 businesses across all U.S. industries received such a score.) "This recognition highlights UTA's ongoing commitment to fostering an inclusive workplace environment," Allen says, "and makes me proud to be part of such a supportive organization." This company culture helped set the stage for the achievements of superstar clients including Karol G, Lil Nas X and Burna Boy.

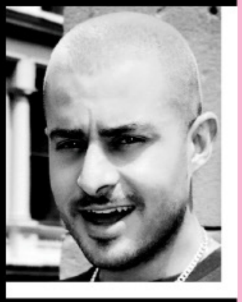
**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Thriving."

## ANNIE BRINN

**Senior vp of publishing, licensing and royalties administration, Warner Music Group**

In 2022, WMG launched Mentoring Remixed, a program that connects junior employees from traditionally marginalized communities — including LGBTQ+ people — with senior executives for learning opportunities. "Due to the great success of its inaugural cohort in 2022-2023," Brinn says, "WMG expanded the program to offer a second cohort in the Americas." Still, Brinn notes, "despite our collective efforts, legislative measures have become a formidable barrier," referring to the rising tide of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation across the United States. "It is imperative to advocate for increased LGBTQ+ representation and cultivate allies in positions of legislative power to halt the enactment of discriminatory laws targeting our community."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Unapologetic."



## JAMES COSTAS-MICHAEL

**Senior director of creative strategy, Fame House, a division of Universal Music Group**

Costas-Michael works on projects across the UMG spectrum, which in the past year have included e-commerce for Olivia Rodrigo's *GUTS* rollout for Geffen and working on Karol G's e-commerce strategy alongside Interscope during the Colombian sensation's U.S. stadium tour. "It has been so rewarding to be able to really lean into her creative identity as an artist," Costas-Michael says of Rodrigo, adding of the Karol G campaign: "Witnessing the strong connection she has with her fans and our team being able to amplify that through merchandise and authentic storytelling has been really fulfilling."

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "Within the music business, the main challenge I see is a lack of sufficient LGBTQ+ representation across all levels, especially in executive positions."

## SAM DUBOFF

**Global head of Spotify for Artists, marketing and policy, Spotify**

If you're an artist receiving royalty checks from Spotify, Duboff is the one writing them. In his role at the company, Duboff and his team were key in crafting Spotify's new payment policies, which are meant to "modernize our royalty system ... [and] drive an additional $1 billion to emerging and professional artists over the next five years," he says. His team oversees the rollout of analytics, marketing, video and merchandising tools on Spotify for Artists that help performers reach more fans. It's working, Duboff says: Since 2017, the number of artists earning at least $10,000 on Spotify each year has more than tripled, to 66,000 in 2023.

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Determined."

## ANDIE FANNO

**Senior attorney, legal, BMI**

In addition to news that the rights management company's previous owners will disburse a $100 million bonus to songwriters and publishers following its sale to New Mountain Capital in February, BMI is expanding its customer service with a new call center and an online dashboard to track royalties. "For the first time, our affiliates have a fully interactive view of their royalty statements, giving easier access and more comprehensive details for a more intuitive, user-friendly experience," Fanno says of the dashboard. "I'm looking forward to seeing future phases of this initiative rollout to better serve and support our incredible roster."

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "The American Civil Liberties Union of Tennessee, which is dedicated to protecting and preserving freedom and equality."

## AMANDA FERRI

**Vp of marketing, DistroKid**

As direct-to-consumer models continue to revolutionize the music industry, Ferri says she's proud to have played a part in their rise. She notes DistroKid's acquisition of Bandzoogle, a leading website builder for musicians, as one of her proudest recent achievements. "They've been empowering indie musicians for many years now and giving musicians 100% of their earnings," she says. "Their culture has been a great fit with DistroKid." From Taylor Swift's pursuit of ownership of her back catalog to Tommy Richman's seismic Billboard Hot 100 debut as an independent artist with "Million Dollar Baby," Ferri says that agency reigns supreme in the industry, and she's proud to play her part.

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "The next frontier is the battle against transphobia. We need to establish and defend the rights of our trans community."

## DAVID FURNISH

**CEO, Rocket Entertainment; chairman, Elton John AIDS Foundation**

See story, page 42.

ALLEN: OSCAR DEL AGUILA FOR BILLBOARD. BRINN: LAURA GODWIN. COSTAS-MICHAEL: COURTESY OF JAMES COSTAS-MICHAEL. DUBOFF: COURTESY OF SAM DUBOFF. FANNO: AUBREY WISE FOR BMI. FERRI: ANNA MARIE TENDLER. GALYON: HUNTER BERRY.

## ALLIE GALYON

**Music agent, WME**

Last year, Galyon and her WME colleagues helped coordinate Love Rising, the benefit concert at Bridgestone Arena in Nashville (featuring artists such as Maren Morris, Sheryl Crow and Hozier) that raised over $500,000 for LGBTQ+ causes in Tennessee following the governor's signing of the so-called drag ban bill. Galyon, who is also on the talent agency's LGBTQ+ board, is especially excited about what the company has coming up. "WME is launching new surrogacy and adoption benefits that LGBTQ+ folks at our company can take advantage of," she says. "It feels good to know we're being supported in all areas of our lives."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Pioneering."

# ELI GELERNTER

**Agent, Wasserman Music**

With a passion for helping artists make meaningful connections with fans, Gelernter has spent the year confirming Wasserman talent for this summer's Pride events. Not only are Natasha Bedingfield and FLO set to headline Chicago and Toronto Pride, respectively, but Slayyyter is on the docket for 10 different Pride celebrations, while nine artists on Gelernter's roster performed at the OUTLOUD Music Festival at WeHo Pride June 1-2 in Los Angeles. "Seeing it all come to life," Gelernter says, "is the best part of my job."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Thriving."

# LAUREN GLUCKSMAN

**Pop artist relations, Apple Music**

In 2023, Apple Music expanded its PROUD Radio franchise to have genre-specific programming across the tech giant's three radio stations — Apple Music 1, Apple Music Country and Apple Music Hits — with the intention of creating "a multitude of spaces for deeply thoughtful and joyful conversations [with] the most exciting artists from across the spectrum of the LGBTQ+ community," Glucksman says. With music and interviews from artists like Brandi Carlile, Maren Morris and G Flip, the shows' respective hosts, Hunter Kelly, Hattie Collins and MNEK, invite the songwriters to tell their stories and build a community over the airwaves.

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Stunning!"

# ANDREW LUDWICK

**Vp of business development, digital, Warner Chappell Music**

In his role at WCM, Ludwick is excited about integrating artificial intelligence into the major publisher's business. "I am optimistic about my management's bullishness and aptitude on AI and grateful to have a seat at the table for strategy and policy meetings at the corporate level," he says. He's also optimistic about LGBTQ+ rights, despite the current challenge his community faces: "Wherever I go, I find most people are well-meaning and want to be an ally," he says. "My hope is that we treat everyone with a little more grace and dignity as the world changes."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Auspicious."

# AMANDA MARTINO

**Director of international commercial strategy, Sony Music Entertainment**

Martino was part of the team that helped Miley Cyrus' "Flowers" become a smash hit, ending 2023 as the No. 2 track on the year-end Hot 100 Songs chart and the No. 1 title on the year-end Billboard Global 200. The executive also helped deliver a Billboard 200 No. 1 for blink-182's comeback release, *One More Time*, in October, as well as Hozier's first-ever Hot 100 chart-topper, "Too Sweet," which also ruled the Billboard Global 200. "It's a privilege to help lead the international commercial strategy for a diverse roster of artists across Sony Music," Martino says.

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Relentless."

# AVERY McTAGGART

**Managing partner, TBA Agency**

Along with internal expansions of TBA's branding and partnerships divisions, McTaggart is proudest of its ever-growing roster. Spurring growth from clients like the band Rawayana and Faye Webster in 2024, McTaggart additionally points to TBA's growing LGBTQ+ roster, citing fast-rising acts like Remi Wolf, Adrianne Lenker and salute as examples of the agency's commitment to fostering change. "We need to remain focused on not only uplifting the voices and art made by our LGBTQ+ artists," he says, "but equally need to invest in making sure there are more spaces within the music business for LGBTQ+ people to thrive."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Involved."

# SARA MERTZ

**Vp of music partnerships for venues, Tixr**

With more than a decade of experience in the industry, Tixr has processed over $1 billion in transactions through its platform built for unified commerce and sales beyond tickets. As of 2024, the ticketing platform — which offers features from personalized seat maps to in-app merchandise and food and beverage integration — has grown to power over 500 live-entertainment brands in 40 countries. "Tixr's growth has been exponential," Mertz says. "As we continue to release new products that dramatically increase our partners' revenue over time, we have continued to fulfill our mission of going beyond ticketing."

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "As a former resident of the Bay Area, I'm a big fan of NCLR [National Center for Lesbian Rights] — not just for what they do for the LGBTQ+ community but also for women's empowerment."

# ALLISON MOORE

**Head of content strategy and operations, SoundCloud**

Since helping launch SoundCloud's First Fans project in 2023, which surfaces new music to listeners most likely to enjoy it to avoid what she calls the "zero-play problem," Moore is proud of having given "millions of artists a better chance" to get their music heard. Behind the scenes, she has a similar mission: "The workplace is still challenging for folks in the LGBTQIA+ community as an underrepresented group. We need mentorship and support from leaders in the music business and beyond. We need safe spaces for sharing and listening."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Vibrant."

GELERNTER: COURTESY OF WASSERMAN MUSIC. GLUCKSMAN: SHERVIN LAINEZ. LUDWICK: JONATHAN WEINER. MARTINO: ANDREW FENNELL. MCTAGGART: JOSH MULDER. MERTZ: AUSTIN NEIL. MOORE: COURTESY OF SOUNDCLOUD.

## ANNA NEVILLE

**Global co-president/COO, TaP Music**

Neville describes the LGBTQ+ community as "resilient," and the word also applies to TaP's star-studded roster — especially Lana Del Rey, whom Neville praises for achieving her biggest year to date for her recorded music following the March 2023 release of her Grammy Award-nominated ninth album, *Did You Know That There's a Tunnel Under Ocean Blvd*. In April, Del Rey continued to celebrate its success with a headlining Coachella set. "We wanted to show the depths of Lana's influence on contemporary music," Neville says, "and I think we've achieved that."

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "The rise of totalitarianism and right-wing politics across the world. I'm hoping the U.S. and the U.K. go against the tide in this year's elections."

## JEFF NICKLER

**Senior vp, Oak View Group/Moody Center**

Venue developer and operator Oak View Group continues to lead the live industry with 10 new arenas either opened in the last 18 months or under development. Austin's Moody Center, which Nickler describes as "one of the company's most successful ventures," celebrated its second anniversary in April and has landed in the top three of the year-end Boxscore chart of top venues with capacities of 10,001 to 15,000 in 2022 and 2023. Since opening, Nickler adds, "the 15,000-seat arena in Austin has emerged as one of the busiest in the world, with over 300 events and $250 million in concert ticket sales."

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "The Trevor Project provides valuable resources, support, counseling and 24/7 crisis services to this marginalized group."

## ALEX ROBERTSON NUTTON

**Senior label relations manager, Amazon Music**

"Championing emerging and established LGBTQ+ artists is a core part of Amazon's DNA," Nutton says. From "commissioning new music from the likes of Sam Smith" (in 2023, Smith covered Christina Aguilera's "Beautiful" exclusively for Amazon Music) to working with George Michael Entertainment "to reintroduce their music to a new generation of queer audiences" (a campaign that Nutton devised and executed), Pride initiatives at Amazon Music extend well beyond the month of June, helping to boost contemporary and legacy LGBTQ+ artists.

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "Stonewall [is] one of the largest LGBTQ+ rights charities in the U.K. who have played a pivotal role in driving transformative changes for the lives of LGBTQ+ people. Their campaigns have influenced public attitudes and changed public policy."

## DANI OLIVA

**Founder/owner, Oliva Law Group**

Festivals and high-profile tours are valuable opportunities for rising artists, and Oliva is all about snagging spots for his roster at Venice Music — his client at Oliva Law Group following a 2023 restructuring. In the past year, Oliva helped guitarist Vixen land gigs with both Halsey's Love and Power tour and Hatsune Miku's 2024 Coachella set. Another one of his "proudest accomplishments" was helping indie pop artist Maiah Manser sign to Arista Records, an example of his commitment to ensuring ascendant stars hit their stride and feel protected in every facet of the music business.

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "The number of anti-trans bills considered across the U.S. has broken records for four consecutive years. It's terrifying."

## DON PARKER

**Senior vp of programming, San Francisco; GM, PRIDE Radio, iHeartRadio**

As Parker puts it, the recent upticks in anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and attacks on the trans community across the United States have made it "more important than ever" to ensure that the community has trustworthy news sources — hence the creation of the company's PRIDE Radio News Update feature. The platform now highlights relevant news and developments to empower listeners with knowledge and inform them about ways to act, expanding on iHeartRadio's reputation as a leading music, entertainment and lifestyle brand.

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "The rise of anti-LGBTQ+ legislation and the normalization of hate and discrimination that follows. When leaders of state and local governments come out against the LGBTQ+ community, in some cases vehemently, it validates negative perceptions some may have against our community."

## HENRY QUINTERO

**Latin tour buyer, Live Nation**

Live Nation's global touring team and roster of Latin tours keep expanding, in line with the company's commitment to diversity and inclusion. "We continue focusing on developing new and established Latin artists into successful touring acts within the U.S.," says Quintero, whose purview includes promotion of sold-out shows for artists such as Danny Ocean, Kany García, Myke Towers, Juanes and Eladio Carrión.

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "The use of recreational substances is a big issue that continues to grow in this community. I hope we can work toward rehabilitation and reform for those suffering from addiction."

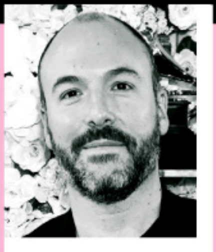
## ED RAZZANO

**Senior vp of administration services, Songwize, ASCAP**

Razzano is proud that ASCAP reported record revenue of $1.7 billion in 2023, but he calls another accomplishment "especially important to me": the formation at ASCAP of an LGBTQ+ group called Syncopation. "Its mission is to create a safe space where members of the LGBTQ+ community and their allies can belong, not just fit in," he says, "empowering all to bring their full authentic selves to ASCAP and to their work on behalf of our members."

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "[Among others is] the HRC [Human Rights Campaign] — because, as its name suggests, it supports all human rights."

NEVILLE: LEE MALONE. NICKLER: COURTESY OF OAK VIEW GROUP. NUTTON: MATT COOKE. OLIVA: LEVI CLANCY. PARKER: KARINA PRIETO MACIAS/IHEARTMEDIA. QUINTERO: MARIO ALZATE. RAZZANO: J. SCARAMAZZO.

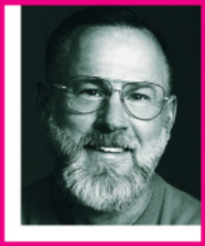


## ADAM ROTH

**Executive vp of global partnerships and business development, Recording Academy**

LGBTQ+ artists made a strong showing in the 66th annual Grammy Award nominations, with Victoria Monét and Phoebe Bridgers each receiving seven nods and such wide-ranging artists as Brandy Clark, Allison Russell, Romy and Troye Sivan also being recognized. In addition, the academy launched Academy Proud, which "shines a spotlight throughout the year on the queer community," Roth says. "One of the Recording Academy's proudest moments was launching Grammy House, which provided programming, panels and performances geared toward the next generation of music creators and executives."

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "While the academy has seen great progress in the recognition of LGBTQ+ artists, representation in the music industry is more crucial than ever."



## SCOTT SEVIOUR

**Chief marketing officer, gamma.**

The media company — which creates, distributes and markets content ranging from music to podcasts — launched in 2023 and quickly partnered with stars such as Snoop Dogg and Usher. Gamma. "had such a dynamic and prolific inception, and I'm so proud that the brand has instant recognition and gravitas within the industry," Seviour says of the Los Angeles-based venture, which acquired distribution platform Vydia in 2022. "We're blessed with illustrious partnerships, have an amazing, dedicated team and we're making an impact on culture."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Besieged."

## ALICE SIMMONS

**Senior director of business and legal affairs, Concord**

As a member of Concord's mergers and acquisitions team, Simmons is proud to have seen the company expand its holdings and begin managing iconic catalogs for acts including Céline Dion, Carrie Underwood and KISS through the acquisitions of Mojo Music & Media and the Round Hill Music Royalty Fund in 2023. With a shared goal to "protect the legacy" of Concord's newly acquired catalogs, Simmons emphasizes she's "proud to work with a team that treats these works with the same respect and attention shown to our artists and songwriters."

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "The industry is long overdue for a reckoning with the inequities that have forced [LGBTQ+ artists and artists of color] to see the historical roots they planted erased from our collective history."

## DARINA SMETHURST-CONNOLLY

**Head of music partnerships, U.K. and Ireland, TikTok**

In April, TikTok Pride's European Union/U.K. group unveiled the Trans+ History Week initiative, a series that Smethurst-Connolly says had two goals: "educating and inspiring staff on the trans+ history lesson we never had," while also "providing insights on how to be a powerful ally in the workplace." Efforts like this are crucial — "two in five trans people have experienced a hate crime or incident because of their gender identity in the last 12 months," Smethurst-Connolly says. "We need to work as allies to address the huge barriers trans people in the U.K. face."

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "Mermaids, an incredible U.K. charity that supports transgender, nonbinary and gender-diverse children and young people and their families."

## DUSTIN TURNER

**Music marketing executive, CAA**

CAA client Kelsea Ballerini hit a career milestone in November when the country star headlined Thompson-Boling Arena in her hometown of Knoxville, Tenn. "The show sold out almost instantly, and to be there with 15,000 people was a special night," Turner says. Maren Morris' series of intimate club shows with a portion of the ticket sales going to GLAAD was also a highlight for Turner, as well as announcing Little Big Town's 25th-anniversary tour, which starts in October with special guest Sugarland. "Getting to work with so many clients and launch tours with Dan + Shay, Jelly Roll, Rainbow Kitten Surprise, Tim McGraw and Gavin DeGraw, among many others this year," Turner says, "has been incredible."

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Resilient."

## JASON VE

**Senior vp of global brand partnerships, 88rising**

Since its founding in 2015, 88rising has uplifted the voices of Asian creatives throughout the music industry; in 2024, Ve says the company helped push that mission forward with the return of 88rising's Head in the Clouds festival to Forest Hills Stadium in Queens. Along with spotlighting talent like Joji and (G)I-DLE, the event created space for LGBTQ+ Asian talent like Deb Never and Dhruv, which Ve says proves "Asian artists aren't just one thing nor one mold to follow."

**THE BIGGEST ISSUE FACING THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY** "We need to better support marginalized groups within the LGBTQ+ community."

## KRISTINA WATERS

**Senior director of marketing and operations, Universal Music Enterprises**

Waters says she's proud to help raise the voices of UMe's queer artists. "I am also so grateful to our artists who continue to keep LGBTQIA+ issues at the forefront of the social conversation via their music and massive digital footprints," she explains. In a time of mounting transphobia, drag bans and other threats to LGBTQ+ rights, Waters believes queer art is more important than ever. When she is not working at UMe, where she puts together marketing activations like the one she executed for No Doubt's return to Coachella this year, she is a supporter of the Trans Youth Equality Foundation and the Elton John AIDS Foundation.

**THE BEST WORD TO DESCRIBE THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY TODAY** "Quintessential."

## ANDRES WOLFF

**Vp of artist relations and marketing, Sony Music Entertainment-U.S. Latin**

Aside from his role at one of the biggest U.S. Latin labels, Wolff has long advocated for the LGBTQ+ community. For the past two years, he has led the label's relationship with Miami Beach Pride, where SME participates as an official sponsor and its artists perform. "We are now working to start having presence in other Pride events around the country. Our goal is to get our artists closer to the community," Wolff says. However, "ongoing attacks on equal rights" as well as "discrimination and lack of representation are still significant challenges."

**THE LGBTQ+ CHARITY I SUPPORT** "Miami Beach Pride raises funds to help fight homelessness in the LGBTQ+ community and provide health resources."

ROTH: TIMOTHY NORRIS/GETTY IMAGES. SEVIOUR: COURTESY OF SCOTT SEVIOUR. SIMMONS: KEAVY HANDLEY-BYRNE. SMETHURST-CONNOLLY: TIKTOK. TURNER: COURTESY OF CAA. VE: DARREN GABRIEL. WATERS: COURTESY OF KRISTINA WATERS. WOLFF: ALESSANDRO MARTINO/SONY MUSIC LATIN.

**CONTRIBUTORS:** Katie Bain, Anna Chan, Leila Cobo, Hannah Dailey, Stephen Daw, Kyle Denis, Paul Grein, Lyndsey Havens, Elias Leight, Joe Lynch, Elizabeth Dilts Marshall, Taylor Mims, Melinda Newman, Kristin Robinson, Dan Rys

**METHODOLOGY:** Nominations for all of *Billboard*'s industry-sourced executive lists open no less than 150 days in advance of publication, and a submission link is sent by request before the nomination period. (Please email thom.duffy@billboard.com for inclusion on the email list for nomination links and for how to obtain an editorial calendar.) *Billboard*'s 2024 Pride List honorees were nominated by their companies and peers and chosen by editors based on factors including information submitted with the nomination, recent newsworthy achievements and the market impact of an executive's work within the past 12 months as measured using data including the *Billboard* charts. We also considered achievements in making the music industry more LGBTQ+ inclusive. The market share of nominee companies was measured by *Billboard* charts, using data available as of April 30. Where required, U.S. record-label market share was consulted using Luminate's current market share for albums, plus track-equivalent and streaming-equivalent album consumption. Unless otherwise noted, Billboard Boxscore and Luminate are the sources for tour grosses and sales/streaming data, respectively. Luminate is also the source for radio audience metrics. The source for radio metrics is monitored station airplay from Mediabase provided by Luminate.

Clark photographed May 28 at Issue Studio in Los Angeles.

**Styling by Avigail Collins**
Shushu/Tong dress and headpiece, Zhilyova gloves, BY FAR shoes.

# 'I'm Queer. I Know How To Code-Switch'

For Grammy-winning hit-maker Annie Clark — better known as the shape-shifting rocker **St. Vincent** — identity and performance have always been linked. Two decades into her career, her influence is felt more than ever

BY JOE LYNCH

PHOTOGRAPHED LENNE CHAI

**D**ID YOU COME IN when I was dressed like a sperm?"

Despite her wry tone, Annie Clark — the artist better known as St. Vincent — isn't joking. Not quite an hour earlier, Clark was posing for her *Billboard* photo shoot in a hooded, ruffled cream mini-dress in front of a billowing blush-pink backdrop meant to evoke a different bit of human anatomy. (Let's just say the setup was a spiritual descendant of Georgia O'Keeffe's work.)

As St. Vincent, Clark conjures an enigmatic, opaque aura. But today, she's in a frank, funny and freewheeling mood. She jests about the suggestive pictures of female models plastered on the walls around us ("Boner patrol, look out!") and swerves easily from topics highbrow (abstract Russian painter Kazimir Malevich) to low (an off-and-on gamer, she was briefly obsessed with *The Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild*). Clark chose to soundtrack her shoot with David Bowie's coke-fueled 1976 classic, *Station to Station*, and as we gush over it, the singer-songwriter gives her beige Prada jacket a little shake. "I do like to think this trench coat is giving 'Dancing in the Street,' " she says, referencing the outrageously '80s music video for Bowie and Mick Jagger's hit cover. "Minus the cocaine."

Much like Clark herself, St. Vincent's Grammy Award-winning output — which has run the gamut from twee indie to ass-kicking art-rock to conceptual electropop — is an arresting mix of the intellect and the id. Her latest album, *All Born Screaming*, can be experienced as an atavistic staring contest with existence — or simply as a rippin' alt-rock record.

"It's about life and death and love," she explains. "And that's it." For the 41-year-old Clark, at least two of those topics are intrinsically linked to her own identity as a queer artist. "Every record I've ever made has been so personal about what's going on in my life at any given time. I'm queer. I know how to code-switch. The idea of identity as performance has been very clear to me since I was a child." Even so, Clark shuts down the suggestion that she adopted a mask or performative identity for the album: "I'm queer, I'm living in multitudes, but this record in particular is not about persona or deconstruction."

Code-switching — changing one's behavior to suit an uncomfortable environment — is nothing new for LGBTQ+ people. Even in the generally progressive-minded music community, Clark says the world queer musicians currently inhabit is "very different" than when she kicked off her recording career in 2006 with the three-song EP *Paris Is Burning*. "Which is one of those things which gives me a lot of hope," she notes. "I know there are certain things in the world trending in a scary direction, but all in all, I'd rather live right now than any other time in history. We wouldn't be having this conversation 60 years ago. I would be a nurse, I would be a secretary, or I would be a mother."

When I suggest that 60 years ago, I would have been pushed into a heterosexual union and having same-sex dalliances on the down-low, she laughs and perks up. "Exactly! You would have a beautiful wife at home and would be getting your dick sucked at the whatever. And you'd never know if it was a cop [trying to entrap you]."

As she references the hankie code (as early as the '70s, gay men used different-colored bandannas to signify sexual preferences) and Hal Fischer's 1977 photo book, *Gay Semiotics: A Photographic Study of Visual Coding Among Homosexual Men*, it's clear Clark knows her queer history. "People the world was hostile to developed these secret languages, secret codes, in order to communicate. I find that fascinating," she says. "You're very aware there's a subterranean, subtext layer to everything that's going on — and you have your antennae up at all times. That is erotic to me. But I'm glad that [I live in this era]."

As for the downside to LGBTQ+ culture going mainstream? "Well, if you're safe for the TV screen, you also invite an aspect of grift [from the outside world]," she muses. "Which… I raise an eyebrow at." To emphasize her point, she cocks her left brow; for a moment, she could pass for a hyperlogical Vulcan on *Star Trek*.

"But there have been plenty of queer people in music. Even if the culture was saying no, there were always queer people in the arts. Please. We have built this."

**"Even if the culture was saying no, there were always queer people in the arts. Please. We have built this."**
**—ANNIE CLARK**

**FOR A COLLEGE** dropout, Clark has done pretty well for herself. Born in Tulsa, Okla., she relocated to Texas as a child when her mother moved her and two older sisters to Dallas following her parents' divorce. (Clark now has four brothers and four sisters from the combined families.) Her childhood obsession with the guitar, ignited by the 1987 Ritchie Valens biopic *La Bamba* starring Lou Diamond Phillips, became serious as she entered her teen years, and a stint as a roadie for her uncle's jazz-folk duo, Tuck & Patti, gave Clark her first taste of the touring business.

Clark attended Boston's prestigious Berklee College of Music but left after three years (though her parents didn't find out until several years later, when they read it in the press). "Other people have real educations," she says. "I had philosophy teachers who were like, 'How is Kierkegaard like Bob Marley?' " She shakes her head, almost tenderly. "It's not. It's not and that's fine." (When I ask how a music school dropout seems to have an endless fount of cultural, historical and artistic references at her disposal, she laughs and asks, "Is that your way of saying, 'It's OK you never went to real college'?")

After cutting herself loose from Berklee, Clark spent 2005 and 2006 on the road with the robe-rocking, symphonic indie outfit Polyphonic Spree, joining Sufjan Stevens' touring band for a spell shortly thereafter. Her solo debut album, *Marry Me*, released in 2007 on Beggars Banquet, was a chamber-pop cauldron with notes of Stevens and Spree, but had a playful, wry sense of humor that indicated it was just the tip of the St. Vincent iceberg. (For one thing, the album takes its title from a running joke on *Arrested Development* — a fact that today causes Clark to rest her head on her fingertips in faux embarrassment before concluding, "It is a great show.")

On her next release, *Actor*, Clark's music developed a jagged, sardonic bite that brought her to the Billboard 200 for the first time (at No. 90). Her top 20 follow-up, the 2011 art-rock statement *Strange Mercy*, was tinged with pain, fury, self-doubt and confusion — and dispelled any lingering misconceptions that she was a holdover from the demure, precious indie pop of the '00s. While Clark had always seemed like an artist with something to say, on *Strange Mercy*, she sounded like an artist who *needed* to say something.

"In order to get good, you have to go through a series of humbling and humiliating experiences," she reflects. "On the other hand, you have to have this psychotic belief — an unreasonable belief, truly — that you are going to write songs and make music that is going to matter. And that's a really crazy thought." She pauses. "I have that thought — with plenty of self-loathing and self-laceration — but I also have this [feeling], 'If I don't do this, I'm going to die.' "

Among those who took notice of Clark's creativity and drive was Talking Heads legend and fellow rock eccentric David Byrne. Their 2012 collaborative album, the funky, brass-heavy *Love This Giant*, netted Byrne his first top 40 entry outside Talking Heads on the Billboard 200.

"Annie is so many things all at once," Byrne tells *Billboard*. "Beautiful, inventive, inscrutable — in the best way possible. I know her as someone warm and friendly, but as anyone listening to her music can hear, she's got a dark side that as far as I know just has an outlet in her music. Would that all of us could do that."

After a lengthy tour with Byrne — "I *love* playing shows. I'm up there, and truly, something else kicks in," Clark emphasizes — she solidified her reputation as an art-rock auteur on her self-titled fourth album, the first of three on Loma Vista, in 2014. With a chromatic purple-blue-pink palette and a gray 'do teased to the heavens, Clark delivered the most stylistically cohesive St. Vincent album yet — and for the first time on wax, she sounded like she was having a blast. *St. Vincent* won Clark a Grammy for best alternative music album, kicking off an active streak of her collecting at least one Grammy per proper studio release since. In 2014, Clark also spoke publicly about her queerness for the first time, telling *Rolling Stone*, "I believe in gender fluidity and sexual fluidity."

With 2017's *Masseduction*, Clark pivoted to electropop and paired it with neon-drenched, latex-heavy visuals, as well as some of her most personal songs yet. Co-produced by Jack Antonoff, the album (her first top 10 entry on the Billboard 200) expanded her creative circle to include a range of musicians such as Sounwave, Kamasi Washington, Jenny Lewis, Mike Elizondo, Pino Palladino and Cara Delevingne (the latter of whom Clark dated for a year and a half, briefly putting her in the tabloid spotlight). *Masseduction* singles "New York" and "Los Ageless" hit the Adult Alternative Airplay and Hot Rock & Alternative Songs charts, and the title track won her the Grammy for best rock song. Not that she's in it for the accolades: "I'm a musician because I'm obsessed with making music," Clark states. "If I wasn't, God knows, I don't think it would be pretty."

As her profile grew, Clark earned her first GLAAD Media Award nomination for outstanding music artist in 2018; that June, she unleashed "Fast Slow Disco," a dancefloor remix of one of *Masseduction*'s tracks, along with a music video where she cavorted with a throng of leather-clad men making out with one another. "Happy Pride," she tweeted. "It was sweet of these boys to let me crash their party."

Fittingly, the tune's title was inspired by a text message exchange with Wendy Melvoin, whose romantic relationship with Lisa Coleman in Prince's backing band The Revolution provided sorely needed representation in the '80s. "Annie's a real artist. It's always satisfying to be friends and compatriots with people that you have respect for," Melvoin says. "She's extremely talented," Coleman agrees. "[She's] a real musician that was so influenced by what we did, and she had a reverence for us. It was easy to return that because she is so good."

By 2021's *Daddy's Home*, Clark had nothing left to prove, which might explain why the album — partially inspired by her father's 2019 release from prison after he served time for a stock manipulation scheme — was her first where she looked backward for inspiration. (Then again, maybe she meant it literally when she titled her 2017-18 tour Fear the Future.) Steeped in '70s rock, AM pop and queer camp, the album netted her another Grammy for best alternative music album and another GLAAD nomination for outstanding music artist. As a victory lap and era-appropriate tie-in, she supplemented her own headlining trek for the record with a stint opening for Roxy Music's farewell tour.

Beyond Roxy Music and Byrne, Clark has amassed an enviable Rolodex of rock royalty. She performed alongside the surviving members of Nirvana at their 2014 Rock & Roll Hall of Fame induction ceremony; produced Sleater-Kinney's 2019 album, *The Center Won't Hold*, and co-starred with the band's Carrie Brownstein in the trippy 2020 mockumentary *The Nowhere Inn*; contributed to the 2021 remix album *McCartney III Imagined* (even getting a phone call from the Beatle himself); and feted Eurythmics at the duo's 2022 Songwriters Hall of Fame induction, performing "Sweet Dreams (Are Made of This)." Having worked with so many of her own musical heroes, she has also paid that forward, contributing to tracks by next-gen fans like Willow and Olivia Rodrigo.

"I've been a huge St. Vincent fan since I was a teenager. I think she's such an inspiring artist and a wonderful person. I was so excited to bring her in to work on this song," Rodrigo tells *Billboard* of co-writing "Obsessed" with Clark for the deluxe version of *GUTS*. "She added so many unique textures and sounds that I could've never thought of."

Those inventive, meticulous methods stuck out to Willow when Clark guested on "Pain for Fun" from the former's 2024 album, *empathogen*. "St. Vincent's prodigious attention to detail is something that I have admired since hearing her for the first time at 12 years old," Willow says. "To have had the opportunity to be in the same room with her, to witness and observe her process, is something that I will always hold close to my heart and something I will always refer back to for inspiration."

"She's an inspiration to me, but I can see [she is] to a lot of other singers and songwriters as well," Byrne says. "And a somewhat underrated guitar goddess." (Clark even has her own signature axe, a collaboration with Ernie Ball Music Man, which Jack White played on *Saturday Night Live* in 2018 and Rodrigo trotted out on her tour this year.)

Another one of those singer-songwriters is, of course, Taylor Swift. Alongside Antonoff and Swift, Clark wrote (and played guitar on) "Cruel Summer" from 2019's *Lover*. After years of fan campaigns and three subsequent studio albums, Swift finally released "Cruel Summer" as a single in 2023; it topped the Billboard Hot 100 for four weeks and has spent more time on the chart than any of her other hits, earning an astounding 1 billion official on-demand U.S. streams, according to Luminate.

"I remain blown away by 'Cruel Summer' being the phenomenon that is it," Clark says. "Not because it isn't a great song. It's indicative of the time we're in, where a song from many albums ago, that wasn't even a single at the time, the fans go, 'No, this one — we pick this one.' And then they march it up the charts. That's completely a testament to her fan base being so powerful."

MAKEUP BY HINAKO USING CHARLOTTE TILBURY AT A FRAME AGENCY. SET DESIGN BY GABRIELA COBAR.

Camilla and Marc shirt,
Nour Hammour coat,
Zhilyova gloves.

Schiaparelli Couture dress and shoes.

"I've been a huge St. Vincent fan since I was a teenager. I think she's such an inspiring artist and a wonderful person."

**—OLIVIA RODRIGO**

**WHILE SOME** critics and fans have described the rock-heavy, emotionally raw *All Born Screaming* as a return to form, the album also marks a few notable firsts for Clark. Though distributed by Virgin Music Group, it's the inaugural release on her own label, Total Pleasure Records, which she calls "just a little cozy place for me." She's excited about plenty of young artists but shrugs off any label boss ambitions. "I never want to be the person who is like, 'I'm so sorry, we can't afford to pay for your video unless you shill for cat laxatives,' " she deadpans. "I'm not trying to be The Man to any talent that I love. It just means autonomy."

Clark insists that "DIY till you die" is her guiding mantra on all fronts, from making music to mounting tours on a scalable level. "I more enjoy the creative side, but you have to be across all of it. It's your career. You can't just let someone tell you where you are going. And putting all those pieces together is fun for me."

Perhaps more significantly, *All Born Screaming* is also the first of her own albums on which she is credited as sole producer (though she has co-produced more than half of her discography).

"I don't think I could have made this record any other way. I don't think I would have written these songs or explored this stuff without the solitude," she says. "Around 2019 [I thought], 'OK, I eventually just want to produce my own work.' When I was making *Daddy's Home*, I started making a plan for my engineer, Cian Riordan, to make my studio proper — to get more into the engineering side, hone my chops and build a playground for myself. But if I'm honest, the seed was planted earlier, because by the time I was 14 or 15 I was recording myself in my bedroom." (Clark's studio is in Los Angeles; she splits her time among New York, L.A. and Texas.)

A 2023 study of popular songs by the Annenberg Inclusion Initiative found that just 3.4% of hits were produced by women in 2022, and Clark is still one of very few female producers finding success in the music business — with plenty more, she notes, deserving attention. "There are lots of women making their music DIY-style, and that is production," she says. "My friend Cate Le Bon [who guests on *All Born Screaming*'s title track] is a great example of someone who produces herself and other people." (The album also features drumming from Dave Grohl, Josh Freese and Warpaint's Stella Mozgawa.)

When it comes to ways to increase LGBTQ+ inclusion in the industry, Clark is reluctant to provide any glib or easy answers. "The answer is, 'Of course,' but I can't go, 'If we only changed this policy.' " The Texas-raised Clark does not, however, hold back when asked about Republican Gov. Greg Abbott, who she says is waging "an absolute war on women and reproductive rights. That dude sucks. He *sucks*. I hate that dude." For a brief moment, she sounds like an exasperated teenager ranting about her high school principal, but soon regains her poise. "What I love about Texas is the toughness and the grit. You can't be too highfalutin. With love, they'll knock you down a peg." She looks thoughtful. "I did run away when I was 18, but at the same time, if you asked me to name parts of my identity, 'Texan' would be up there."

As an artist who has explored both identity and technology deeply, Clark is cautiously intrigued by the musical potential of artificial intelligence in the hands of artists. "The tool is as interesting as its holder," she says, then flashes a mischievous half-smile. "In some ways, I'm more concerned about artists sounding like AI than I am [about] AI sounding like artists."

Clark is far more troubled by a more established technology in the digital music era. "If you are a big pop artist, streaming is fine. But there is some music that reaches you very deeply but isn't music that you put on every single day. I'm not going to listen to John Coltrane's *A Love Supreme* every day. It's one of the most pivotal records of my life, but I'm not going to stream it over and over," she says. "Streaming incentivizes songs to be consumable over and over again. Now, certainly there's great music you want to consume like that — but there's a lot of music that's excellent and doesn't fall into that category. And those artists, because of streaming, are wilting on the vine." (St. Vincent's catalog has accumulated a respectable 394.6 million official on-demand U.S. streams.)

Aside from friends like Le Bon, there are plenty of modern artists who keep Clark jazzed about music's future. "I love Rosalía," she says, leaning forward in her chair. "I saw her show last year. It was just art. It was so thoughtfully done. Post-modern choreography, flamenco. Just excellent." *All Born Screaming* includes "Sweetest Fruit," a tribute to the late trans artist SOPHIE, whom Clark deeply admired (though fan reaction to its literal lyrics was mixed). British rapper Little Simz is another favorite, and she lights up when talking about Willow. "She's unbelievable. Her knowledge base and depth of reference is deep and varied. She's pulling all these things together and making them her own, which is exactly what an artist should do."

Whether speaking about her fellow artists, the music industry or her queer identity, Clark is animated and engaged; the only time she seems at a loss is when talking about how she fills her time that *isn't* spent making music.

"I listen to a lot of audiobooks. Which is so boring," she murmurs. "I work out. So boring." Does she cook for herself? "Girl, no. Even playing *Zelda*, I would make dubious food." Watch TV? "I will maybe watch something to fall asleep. I rewatched *30 Rock* recently. I am obsessed with *Girls5eva*. It's all the sensibility of *30 Rock*, but with deep musical references. It makes me so happy." Foster any unusual hobbies? "I walked into this bar across from Electric Lady [Studios in New York], but it was the wrong place — it was a coffee shop that turns into a knitting hour. I got the fuck out of there."

After nearly two decades of making music professionally, Clark doesn't seem fatigued or disenchanted by a business that often frustrates uncompromising creatives. If anything, she's finding it easier to "trust in the process" with seven albums under her beloved trench's belt. "There's going to be speed bumps, and there's going to be days when you don't want to get out of bed. 'Ugh, I can't even face myself.' And other days where you're like, 'Yeah, I am crushing it, wow!' "

Calling those polar mood swings "cancers to excise," Clark says "it's a miracle" she gets anything done. "The whole thing is chasing this feeling of being lit up and confused but excited at the same time," she says. "It's a bunch of people blowing into the same thing to make a balloon and, eventually, it rises. I don't know how anything happens. I really don't. The whole thing is mysterious. But I know if I focus on this little thing that I love, it will be OK." b

TRO | ESSEX
MUSIC GROUP

Congratulations on

75

years

From your friends at NMPA

NMPA
IS ABOUT THE SONGS

The Essex TRO publishing catalog features the works of such writers as (from left) Guthrie, Evans, Townshend, Seeger, Lead Belly and Bolan.

# TRO ESSEX HITS 75: 'WE ARE READY FOR THE FUTURE'

The pioneering music publisher launches new label Shamus Records

BY KRISTIN ROBINSON

**FLY ME TO THE MOON,"** "This Land Is Your Land," "We Shall Overcome," "Are You Lonesome Tonight," "Space Oddity" — the list reads like the top titles in a major music company's catalog.

But it's actually a list of just a few of the copyrights in the catalog of the quiet independent publishing giant TRO Essex Music Group. Founded in 1949 by Howie Richmond, a former press agent for the day's biggest stars like Frank Sinatra, Glenn Miller and Gene Krupa who went on to become a pioneering music publisher (and co-founder of the Songwriters Hall of Fame), today's TRO Essex started under the name Cromwell Inc. and quickly grew into a collection of 22 publishing companies under The Richmond Organization (TRO) umbrella. It became a titan of indie publishing, particularly in the 1950s, '60s and '70s, finding success in jazz with Bill Evans and Alec Wilder, folk with Pete Seeger, Lead Belly and Woody Guthrie, and rock with Pink Floyd, Black Sabbath, Marc Bolan of T. Rex, The Who and Pete Townshend.

At 75, TRO Essex is still going strong, managing its formidable catalog of publishing and recorded-music interests through its international offices in Hamburg, Germany; London; Paris; and elsewhere. After a few decades of taking on more of a catalog management role, TRO Essex is returning to frontline signings, using proceeds from past evergreens to fund new development.

"For our 75th anniversary, we started to think about ways we could celebrate our past and move into our next chapter," says Kathryn "Kathy" Ostien, COO of global music operations. "So we restructured and brought in a whole new A&R team. In 2023, we signed 26 new writers to the publishing catalog. We then launched a new record label called Shamus Records at the end of the year to manage their masters."

Ostien

This includes betting on albums arriving this year by newcomers of all genres, including alt-pop talent Sam Louis, indie pop artist Casii Stephan and jazz producer Matt Stevens.

The company is also rolling out the latest album installment in its series *Evergreens Reimagined*, under Shamus, enlisting its new talent to cover older hits. "It's an exciting time," Ostien says. "We are building fast on top of our already incredible base, but we are ready for the future, too."

**You look after such a rich back catalog, which you administer in-house. What is your strongest income stream?**

I feel like it changes every five years, mostly because of the technology that we've seen. Obviously, it used to be CDs, tapes, LPs. Mechanicals were everything. Performance has always been strong, too. Overall, I think mechanicals have always remained very steady. Our most iconic catalogs continue to do well with mechanicals as well as synchronization.

When I first came to TRO Essex [in 2000], the synch market wasn't much of anything. We were outsourcing it. Now it's a huge amount of what we are doing — talking to the studios in Los Angeles, New York. Any type of synch is important for us — commercials, films, TV shows. The Hollywood strikes did not help last year.

**Has synchronization risen now that the strikes are over?**

We have definitely seen some nice pickup in the past few months.

**Do certain genres in your catalog fare better for synch than others? I've heard rock is particularly of interest for synch.**

BOLAN: ESTATE OF KEITH MORRIS/REDFERNS/REDFERNS. EVANS: DAVID REDFERN/REDFERNS. GUTHRIE: CBS/GETTY IMAGES. LEAD BELLY: RAY WHITTEN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. SEEGER: ROBERT ALTMAN/MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. TOWNSHEND: MICHAEL OCHS ARCHIVES/GETTY IMAGES. OSTIEN: SABRINA ASCH PHOTOGRAPHY.

Stephan

I don't know that I see it that way. There was a period in the early 2000s where rock was really, really desirable for commercials. Every ad agency wanted a Pete Townshend song. It ebbs and flows and all comes from the studios — sometimes they want hard rock, sometimes they want a standard. It depends. During COVID, we did really well with synch, ironically because we have a lot of wartime peace songs, hopeful songs. Everybody wanted that. It did well with commercials and productions during that time.

**Your catalog includes some of America's most essential protest anthems, and the last five years or so have seen the rise of several social movements. Do you look after those songs with particular care?**
We do have a lot of protest songs. It's interesting, especially with the political climate that we've had in the past several years. One of the things we take a lot of pride in is protecting those songs and making sure that they're being used in the way that they were originally written — you always want to stay true to that. You want to keep songs like "This Land Is Your Land" within the time and [context] it was important. We also represent "We Shall Overcome," which is very iconic. That song in particular is curated the most heavily because it's so special to [the Civil Rights] movement.

> **"For our 75th anniversary, we started to think about ways we could celebrate our past and move into our next chapter."**
> —OSTIEN

**How has the popularity of sampling, interpolating and more influenced your catalog in the last few decades?**
Sampling really started taking off with hip-hop and rap in the late '90s, and then it *really* took off in the mid-2000s. It has been great for our back catalog, though, to have new copyrights established on top of songs. A great example is how Joe Cocker's "Woman to Woman" became 2Pac's "California Love." We work with a lot of hip-hop and rap managers to use some of these iconic songs and bring them to life.

**The catalog market has been red hot for the last five or so years. Does TRO Essex ever try to acquire more catalogs?**
We don't do acquisitions — we've never needed to. We want to grow our company by following our own history, which was always based on discovering new, incredible songs that don't have a home and seeing what we can do with them.

**Was there a period where you completely stopped signing frontline acts? Or was it just a slowdown up until the founding of Shamus Records?**
I don't know if I would say it fully stopped, but [it slowed in] the '80s to '90s. This is a large catalog to manage independently. We're trying now to restart that signing process.

**Is there a particular identity you're trying to build with the Shamus signees?**
It's still so new, and our team here is still so new. Mostly, we're just trying to do what [founder] Howie [Richmond] did — find songs and acts that we like and see what we can do with them. I don't know if we really have a brand in mind with our roster, but we were thinking that we wanted to bring some newer sounds to the catalog.

**What is one of the most important things you can offer to an act looking to sign to Shamus Records/TRO Essex?**
It's an interesting time right now because metadata is everything. We feel that metadata management takes away from the creativity that writers and artists might have if they didn't have to sit there and go through all these different portals to try to get their money. That's something we excel at.

**Having accurate and complete metadata — like the names of all the songwriters, the performing rights organizations and publishers they use — is important to keep track of as a publishing administrator. Do you think it is more important than ever to manage metadata closely to ensure you and your talent are paid?**
Yes, exactly. We had to bring in new staff just to handle the metadata management. This is true for all publishers. It has been an incredible thing, what happened with [the Music Modernization Act] and the creation of the [Mechanical Licensing Collective]. The MLC has built this portal that so easily allows you to go match and claim royalties for your songs. It has really made it so much easier. There was nothing there before. It has made it much more universal and cleaner.

**Doing administration in-house with the caliber of the catalog TRO Essex holds must be a lot of work. How do you keep up with it as an independent player?**
It is one of the hard things about remaining independent because as the revenue increases, the administration costs increase as well, if you're doing it correctly.

**I'm sure anyone would be interested in buying or administering this catalog for TRO Essex. Why was it important to make sure that you are always independent, always doing your own administration despite the challenges that come with it?**
I'm not the right one to speak about why we never sold, but the motivation was just never there for us. We're proud of what we do. We're strong. We're financially very healthy. We don't think anybody else knows these copyrights as well as us, and we're good at what we do.

Louis

**There are several emerging revenue streams in music, particularly in social media licensing. TikTok has made headlines this year for its strained negotiations with Universal Music Group. Are these sources of income good moneymakers for your catalog?**
I haven't seen that [TikTok payments] make a huge [boost] to us financially, but every way you can get a catalog out there is important, especially with a vintage catalog. It's a new way to introduce it. We just need to be paid appropriately. We follow the guidance of the [National Music Publishers' Association].

**Another emerging area of the music business is artificial intelligence, which could provide risks and benefits to catalog holders. Some are even using AI to market catalogs. Do you have any estates interested in leaning into AI for this purpose?**
There's so much more to understand about AI. At this point, I don't believe it affects us as greatly as it would probably some of the current recording artists, mostly because of the copying of the voices and likenesses. For us, our copyrights are much more secure bedrocks. It'll be interesting to see how AI develops and what that true impact is on copyright. We haven't had anyone really concerned from an estate or writer perspective. As I said earlier, though, every five years it seems there's a sea change. We're watching it.

**Given that you have such a strong back catalog, it would be easy to say, "That's it." You're just going to keep doing the administration and not push forward into signing new acts. Frontline is so risky. Why was it important to continue to sign new talent?**
It's a lot of work managing a catalog like this, and it presents different, evolving challenges around the world, so for a long time that's what we did. However, looking at the 75th anniversary, we decided we wanted to breathe new life into it. We wanted to create these new covers, explore a new sound and see what we could do to reinvigorate it. While we were at it, we just thought, "OK, let's see what else we can sign." It's an exciting time to celebrate this incredible history of the past 75 years and then look at the next 75 years with so much hope and excitement. b

STEPHAN: ALEXXUS BROWNING; LOUIS: ANDREW VALDIVIA/SPACED VISUALS.

# HAPPY 75TH ANNIVERSARY TO

# TRO ESSEX MUSIC GROUP

HERE'S TO MANY MORE YEARS

OF NURTURING MUSICAL EXCELLENCE

YOUR FRIENDS AT

ascap

# for the record

# 40 YEARS OF 'PURPLE' REIGN

Big Brother was supposed to take over in 1984 — not a 5'2", 26-year-old musical polymath from Minnesota. But with the June 25, 1984, release of *Purple Rain*, Prince took his throne as a global pop star.

The album "was like a magic bullet," Revolution guitarist Wendy Melvoin tells *Billboard* ahead of Celebration 2024, a five-day Minneapolis party with performances from The Revolution, Morris Day and New Power Generation. "He knew there was lightning in a bottle."

*Purple Rain*, which will turn 40 in June, poured onto *Billboard*'s pages as soon as it came out.

### 'WET' BEHIND THE EARS

When Prince released his debut album, *For You*, the April 29, 1978, *Billboard* hailed it as "a one-man gangbuster" from an "18-year-old musical phenomenon who goes only by the name Prince." The reviewer predicted "across the board appeal," but only "Soft and Wet" hit the Billboard Hot 100, and it stalled at No. 92. It wasn't until *1999*, his fifth album, that Prince sped to the chart's top 10 with "Little Red Corvette" and "Delirious."

### BABY, HE'S A STAR

The June 2, 1984, *Billboard* called The Jacksons' *Victory* the month's biggest album, with Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.* named the "next hottest." The same article mentioned two other albums "by acts that hit platinum" — Prince and Jane Fonda. Two weeks later, *Billboard* identified Prince as a critics' pick, "viewed with skepticism by pop programmers." But a headline in the July 7 issue trumpeted that "Prince Keeps Springsteen Humble" as "When Doves Cry" flew to the peak of the Hot 100, shutting out The Boss' "Dancing in the Dark." By Aug. 4, Prince & The Revolution overthrew Springsteen atop the Billboard 200, and *Purple Rain* ruled for an astonishing 24 weeks.

### 'RAIN' STORMS THEATERS

"Seeing *Purple Rain* makes it clear that the man from Minneapolis is certainly going to give anybody else making music this year a real hard time," according to a movie preview in the July 28, 1984, *Billboard*. The next week's issue called it "the most gripping contemporary rock movie in years," as well as "the most performance-oriented music exploitation film since the glory days of Richard Lester's classic Beatles films." Another article, about the release of the single "Let's Go Crazy," reported that Prince had delivered "a second tour de force" — "even before the doves have stopped crying." It became his second Hot 100 No. 1 in the Sept. 29 issue.

### CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT

An article in the Dec. 22, 1984, issue declared that the year had been "dominated by the phenomenon of His Purple Badness, thanks to a multimedia blitz of vinyl, video and film soundtracks" that "epitomized the upbeat creative and commercial climate." "When Doves Cry" was revealed as the "top-selling single of the year." But mainstream success didn't clean up Prince's dirty mind: The same issue noted that growing interest in B-side "Erotic City" — "fueled" by "controversial lyric content" — was forcing radio stations to "wrestle with how to deal with its popularity."

—JOE LYNCH

ILLUSTRATION BY BARBARA GIBSON

PRINCE: ROSS MARINO/GETTY IMAGES, WARNER BROS. PICTURES/COURTESY OF THE EVERETT COLLECTION

TRO | ESSEX
MUSIC GROUP

FLY ME TO THE MOON (IN OTHER WORDS) FEELING GOOD BLACK
BLACK BETTY MY GENERATION THIS LAND IS YOUR LAND DREAM
DREAM A LITTLE DREAM OF ME I CAN SEE FOR MILES IRON MAN
A BOY NAMED SUE NIGHTS IN WHITE SATIN PARANOID SPACE OD
TURN! TURN! TURN! (TO EVERYTHING THERE IS A SEASON) WAR
BANG A GONG (GET IT ON) IF I HAD A HAMMER (THE HAMMER SONG
US AND THEM TIME ONLY YOU (AND YOU ALONE) BRAIN DAMAGE
ONLY YOU (AND YOU ALONE) HAPPY JACK FOOD GLORIOUS FOO
THOSE WERE THE DAYS THE GREAT GIG IN THE SKY A WHITER SHA
A WHITER SHADE OF PALE ECLIPSE WHERE DID YOU SLEEP LAST
ARE YOU LONESOME TONIGHT? BREATHE WALTZ FOR DEBBY SO
SOME CHILDREN SEE HIM I'D DO ANYTHING ON THE RUN TUESDA
TUESDAY AFTERNOON (FOREVER AFTERNOON) SPEAK TO ME TW
TWILIGHT TIME ANY COLOUR YOU LIKE GOODNIGHT IRENE COTT
N FIELDS (THE COTTON SONG) SUBSTITUTE RIDING IN MY C
WHO CAN I TURN TO (WHEN NOBODY NEEDS ME) BLA
BLACK SABBATH SYLVIA'S MOTHER I BELIEVE CAR
CAROLING, CAROLING ONE OF THESE DAYS N.I.B.
SET THE CONTROLS FOR THE HEART OF THE SUN LA
LAST NIGHT I HAD THE STRANGEST DREAM ASTRON
ASTRONOMY DOMINE CHILDREN OF THE GRAVE QUES
QUESTION SWEET LEAF OH! LOOK AT ME NOW WHERE IS
WHERE IS LOVE THE STORY IN YOUR EYES SAN FRANCISCO BAY

75 YEARS OF SONGS
TRO ESSEX MUSIC GROUP

# Independent Music Publishers Since 1949

SABBATH BLOODY SABBATH SHE CHANGES SEPTEMBER SONG
25 MINUTES TO GO ONE'S ON THE WAY SNOWBLIND GOODBYE TO
GOODBYE TO ROMANCE KISSES SWEETER THAN WINE THE WIZAR
HOLE IN THE SKY NON DIMENTICAR IT'S ALRIGHT SPEAK LOW
GOING THRU CHANGES ONCE IN A LIFETIME PLANET CARAVAN
DIRTY WOMEN JACK THE STRIPPER NEVER SAY DIE FAIRIES WEA

Celebrate 75 Years of
Songs and Songwriters

DO WE HAVE ROYALTIES FOR YOU?

More than $700 Million Distributed
To Musicians and Vocalists

Royalties Distributed to Both Union & Non-Union Session Musicians & Vocalists For Their Performance on Songs Played on Satellite Radio, Non-Interactive Streaming Services, Webcasts, Other Digital Formats and International Neighboring Rights

Find Out If We Have Royalties For You
www.afmsagaftrafund.org

AFM & SAG·AFTRA
Intellectual Property Rights Distribution Fund

The AFM & SAG-AFTRA IPRD Fund is a 501(c)(6) non-profit organization - est. 1998
info@afmsagaftrafund.org